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PREDESTINED FAILURE AND SYSTEMIC TRAUMA IN NEOLIBERAL SCHOOL REFORMS; A STORY OF INSTITUTIONAL DISPOSSESSION

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Abstract

Predestined Failure and Systemic Trauma in Neoliberal School Reforms;

A Story of Institutional Dispossession

By: Kirsten Standeven

This qualitative dissertation study focuses on the effects of neoliberal school reforms and their effects on a charter school in an historically dispossessed Chicago community. The author situates the school's micro-level culture within larger macro-level, exo-level, and meso-level contexts to explore the interactivity between nested, ecological systems. The author argues that historical dispossession is an institutional trauma that is the result of unhealthy systems and neoliberal circuits of worth that result in undue accumulation for some and systemic/institutional dispossession for others. The study serves as an object of reflection for exploring the efficacy of neoliberal school reforms and provides empirical evidence, a philosophical reflection, and pedagogical implications based on the school's "predestined failure" and the school's resulting "story of dispossession." Student, families, the community, and educators all experienced varying levels of dispossession based upon a myriad of converging neoliberal logics that had created a field of possibilities for educators who intended to provide a high-quality educational choice in the form of a charter school founded through philanthrocapitalist financial funding and a corporatized process for gaining charter school approval in the city of Chicago. Utilizing Critical Race Theory, post-structuralism, grounded theory, and the concept of neoliberal circuits of

worth, the author traces neoliberal logics from macro- to micro- systems. The author argues that institutional systems that exacerbate historical dispossession within new generations creates compounded deprivation and systemic/institutional trauma that is transmitted to those who are repeatedly dispossessed by the public institutions that are purported to provide them with equal and equitable educational opportunities. The need for healthy public systems and implications for moving forward both within school settings and within the field of educational research are explored.

Acknowledgements

One of the most profound understandings I gained from doing this work is the idea that "racialized outcomes do not necessarily require racial actors," (Ehrenreich, 2016, p. 121). The systems that we live within are complex and expansive, and our individual choices for survival, or if we're truly lucky, for thriving, often create tensions and contradictions that require a deep awareness of our own positionality and identity if we intend to live in alignment with our stated ideals for racial and economic equity. However, just as racialized outcomes don't require racist actors, I have been blessed to discover that spiritualized outcomes to do not necessarily require spiritual actors either.

The kindness, compassion, and mentorship that I was privileged to experience as I undertook this quest for knowledge, to better understand why our systems seemed so broken for the students I love and intended to serve, has been humbling. My anger and rage at societal realities upon entering the program began to shift and dissipate around my fourth year in the program when I experienced a peak self-actualization event where I went from believing I was an atheist to feeling a deep, spiritual connectedness to everyone and every living thing around me in an instant. I began to understand that projecting shame, blame, and guilt (the by-products of my anger and rage) were not the path towards healing. Instead, I needed to lean into understanding, compassion, and empathy. I can't help but think of Maslow's hierarchy of needs as it became clear that my needs were being abundantly met for the first time within my own micro-cultural, professional experiences. I was thirty-nine years old, and I had

just completed my qualifying examinations months earlier which would allow me to proceed with my dissertation study. I can't pretend to fully understand why it happened at that time, but, for me, it served as evidence that I was on my authentic path. I felt that I was right where I was supposed to be, but more importantly, I was with the folks I was supposed to be with too. The people that have been on my path have been spiritual actors, whether or not they ever intended to provide spiritualized outcomes for my professional development and growth.

They often say, "it takes a village," and I would not be here without my village. My parents and their various forms of support have been unwavering. Although they don't always understand or want to see what I share with them about my studies, they have always believed in my capacity to follow my dreams. This provided a consistent level of safety, love, and belonging that I'm not sure I would have found internally without their external reminders. My Ph.D. colleagues at UCSC became a family-like support system for the first few years of my program, as well. Ethan, Mecaila, Arnold, and Rebecca took me and my family in and made it easy for us to settle into a new community. The love, acceptance, and inclusivity that they all extended and shared with my transgendered son and my unconventional, little chose family has had lasting impacts on our lives.

My advisor, Brad Olsen, and my committee members, Cindy Cruz and Jabari Mahiri helped me to understand what true mentorship means. Prior to my Ph.D. studies, I only experienced leaders that micromanaged, distrusted, and constrained possibilities. The idea that I could follow my authentic path to learning and follow

what I passionately knew I wanted to explore was liberating and empowering. I have no doubt that my learning and self-actualizing experiences were directly connected to their thoughtful feedback and the freedom they modeled for pursuing one's own intellectual and professional well-being. Additionally, I am grateful to everyone I encountered at UCSC in the education, history, legal studies, feminist studies, and the visual arts programs as I pursued this work. Each taught me something unique, and our connections were always confirmed through synchronicities and shared purpose.

This study would never have been able to take shape and unfold without the educators and research participants who gave so generously with their time and their personal experiences. I cannot express enough gratitude for the administration, the teachers, and the students who were members of the school community where this study took place. Their openness and honesty with me regarding their personal lives and their professional experiences during the year of data collection inspired me to complete this project in ways that upheld their integrity while challenging mine in all the best ways. I am grateful and indebted to each educator that shared their story with me.

Most of all though, I must thank my unconventional, little, chosen family. My life partner and spiritual teacher, Mike Standeven, and my son, Ren Standeven, make it easy for me to show up as my authentic self on a day-to-day basis. Even though I often ask for us to align with expansive paradigms for relating that challenge the heteronormative, single family unit, they remain open and curious about how we can each find well-being and move towards new imaginaries for healthy relating. I hope

we always resonate as a family and find ways to cooperate so that we each feel seen, heard, and valued every day. This is the gift you have given me, and my deep appreciation for your support will assuredly be reciprocated.

Chapter One: Groundwork(ing) and Foundational Thinking

I want to see America be what she says she is in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

America, be what you proclaim yourself to be! *- Pauli Murray*

1.1 Introduction

Americans are experiencing dynamic and complex polarizations regarding the roles that race and racism play within past and current public institutions, within narrative histories of the United States of America, and within the current American, neoliberal episteme overall. There are Americans who believe that the United States of America is a post-racial society that has never been inherently racist (as evidenced by Barack Obama's Presidency in 2008), and there are Americans that believe that we live in an inherently and endemically racist society that continues to oppress its own citizens (based on race and other intersectional identities). There are Americans that believe that the U.S. is a colorblind society and that one's race does not determine one's lived experiences, and there are Americans that believe that one's race (along with other intersectional identities) can play an overtly deterministic role in one's potential outcomes for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Within American K-12 public schooling, typically one of the first public institutions that most Americans engage with outside of their homes, this polarized and polarizing debate is particularly timely and salient. The ways in which America approaches educational public policy and educational reforms often hinges on American ideological

imaginaries of having an equitable and meritocratic society. Within the institution of public schooling, conflicting ideologies are often a given: public schools reflect our larger society and its debates, many of which are conflicts within our larger culture. Ideological contradictions, such as believing in America as a meritocracy while simultaneously understanding that white supremacy continues to permeate America's institutions and public schooling, are daily lived realities for educators. Examining these contradictions and understanding the tensions that they create for educators, students, and families is critical for both meaningful public policy formation and for informing school-level administrators who professionally help to develop other educators.

Meritocracy and a post-racial America are common sense, ideologically neutral imaginaries for many Americans. According to Milner (2013), "U.S. society is philosophically and ideologically structured such that all people are supposedly created equally with the same opportunities for success. In reality, however, educational practices and opportunities are not equal or equitable," (p.36). The "American Dream" is a fundamentally and ideologically flawed myth unless similar and equitable opportunities exist for all individuals. The myth of America as a meritocracy works to deny the existence of institutional and systemic barriers that reinforce discriminatory policies and practices (Milner, 2013). Structural issues and barriers mean that systems matter and that not all individuals are treated equally in our society. Public schooling, as a primary theater for our politics and power relations in U.S. society, is no exception (Cohen & Neufeld, 1981).

Regardless of political partisanship or loyalties, America's public schools are often characterized as schools that fail many of their students, as evidenced through "the achievement gap," (Fusarelli & Young, 2011). Many seem to believe that solving inequality in society can be accomplished through schooling and the education system alone. The 1954 *Brown versus The Board of Education* ruling was supposed to end an American apartheid. However, deep divides about education quality and segregated schooling remain and are evidence of the ways in which public, institutional system is unhealthy for many of the constituents that that system is purported to serve. Educational reformers often point out the various ways in which schools are in need of reforms to better serve all students (Hess, 2010; Katz & Rose, 2013; Kozol, 2005; Orfield & Eaton, 1996; Payne, 2010; Ravitch, 2010; Tyack & Cuban, 1995), but they also often disagree on the means to achieving the necessary reforms. The field of possibilities for educational reforms are emblematic of our larger cultural contexts, however, and diffuse ideologies and unseen (and unexamined) circuits of worth (Melamed, 2011; Ong, 2006) often limit possible approaches to those solutions that are aligned with America's current episteme of neoliberal multiculturalism (which believes that the market can act as a better equalizer than redistributive government social policies). The "common sense" narrative within neoliberal multiculturalism (and the market-based educational reforms they supposedly warrant) allows power to nourish "circuits of worth" that both shape and (re)produce the narrative of "failing schools" that was conceptualized

by neoliberal reformers beginning with the publication of A Nation at Risk (ANAR) in 1983 (Lipman, 2016).

Currently, within the American institution of public schooling, American sentiments regarding identity politics and racial polarities are fueling partisan controversies as Critical Race Theory (CRT) is being banned by state legislatures in response to the implementation of anti-racist curriculums across the U.S. How we frame our history and, more importantly, how we approach our current understandings of how our historical past shows up in our present moments and institutions is critical for who our nation will become. Ideologies like white supremacy, liberalism, and paternalism are often unconsciously believed to be natural, diffuse, and/or coded as benign, yet often run concurrently in Americans' minds, with contradictory ideological imaginaries created by the "American Dream" and the educational imaginary of America as a meritocracy. Within America's neoliberal episteme, it can be difficult to detect how ideologies operationalize power relations, especially when there is a political will that seeks to actively silence narratives that do not agree with a positivist, capitalist, grand narrative of (white) liberalism and paternalism. "In other words, not only have racial exclusion and racial inclusion paradoxically risen in tandem, but so have colorblindness and multiculturalism, which arguably stabilized as nonantagonistic (if contradictory) poles of contemporary (racial) common-sense," (Singh, 2017, p. 131).

This study intends to serve as an object of reflection for the "moving substrate of dispersed, heteromorphous, [and] localized" (Foucault, as quoted in Deacon, 1998)

power relations of white supremacy, liberalism, and paternalism (neoliberal and capitalist ideologies inherent to America since her founding) within neoliberal educational reforms as they are applied within the contexts of U.S. public schooling. This study could be included as an example of what Michelle Fine (Weis & Fine, 2012) would call a "dispossession story." My findings can aspire to serve as a testimonial (a sort of counter-story to the assumed "efficacy" of neoliberal school reforms) to the ways in which "power relations or 'intersecting relations of force' are not reducible to any one particular process, relationship, or institution but exist between every point of a social body," (Deacon, 1998, p. 115). As such, this study hopes to complicate and push against deterministic frames of racism as either systemic or as the product of a few individual "bad apples" who are racist.

> The powerful mechanisms which make people sensitive to inequality cannot be understood in terms of either social structure or of individual psychology alone. Individual psychology and societal inequality relate to each other like lock and key. One reason why the effects of inequality have not been properly understood before is because of a failure to understand the relationship between them. (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010, p.33)

As contradictory as our national ideologies and imaginaries might be, our public institutions and the individuals who work within them do not *need* to be consistently nourished by the ideological moving substrate, yet for centuries, they have been. Denying that the ideological moving substrate of our country is/has been composed of white supremacy, liberalism, and paternalism is to deny the circuits of privilege and circuits of dispossession (Fine and Ruglis, 2009; Weis and Fine, 2012) that are inherent to epistemic neoliberal circuits of worth (Melamed, 2011; Ong, 2006). This study will examine how power relations operate within both society's

neoliberal circuits of power (at the macro-, exo-, meso-levels) and within one charter school's experiences (micro-level) while actively being nourished by the ideological moving substrate within the context of Chicago's neoliberal school reforms. Again, this study is not claiming that American institutions are inherently and hopelessly white supremacist, individualist (liberal), and paternalistic, rather this study seeks to explore how power relations operate to (re)create circuits of power within our institutions, both historically and currently. Understanding neoliberal circuits of worth can help us to identify critical shortcomings within educational public policies and within America's public schools so that we do not unconsciously (re)create circuits of worth that *are* endemic to racist institutions, systems, and societies. If individual educators do not meaningfully examine and reflect upon how they themselves have experienced circuits of worth and upon how differently situated others experience circuits of worth in their lives, then we will continue to manifest dysconscious forms of racism within schools that are purporting to address inequities. Dysconscious racism, "is not the *absence* of consciousness but an impaired consciousness or distorted way of thinking about race as compared to, for example, critical consciousness. Uncritical ways of thinking about racial inequity accept certain culturally sanctioned assumptions, myths, and beliefs that justify social and economic advantages white people have as a result of subordinating others," (King, 1991, 128).

This study can also, hopefully, serve as a piece of scholarship that aligns with Weis and Fine's concept of a critical, methodological bifocality (Weis and Fine, 2012). Weis and Fine (2012) describe their proposed theory of method in this way,

> Our proposed theory of method takes up the difficult theoretical and empirical work of tracing these circuits [interlocking circuits of dispossession and privilege] by connecting global flows of capital, bodies, ideas, and power with local practices and effects. It does so by tracing new linkages between educational policy and everyday life in schools, elite and "failed" institutions, the transformation and privatization of public space, and the everyday discourse of possibility and despair that saturate, in varying ways and to varying extent, middle and upper middle class, and struggling communities. More than ever before, our work on the production and reproduction of privilege suggests that is it important for researchers to situate ethnography and discursive analyses within history and structure so that these distinct stories can be told in (dis)harmony. We offer "bifocality" as an alternative to the structure/agency split; as a corrective to simplistic resilience on safe spaces and at times over-determinism of a wholly structural focus. (p.35)

This study explores the historical dispossession of Black education in the United States by contextualizing one charter school's experiences with "predestined failure." The school's leaders eventually came to understand their school's failure as a structural operationalizing of macro- and exo-level white supremacy and community dispossession within the charter school they founded/worked in with the intention of actively resisting white supremacy. The schools' leaders and administrators (individuals who unintentionally, yet, ultimately reproduced systemic, neoliberal circuits of worth within their institution) failed to understand the ideological moving substrates and the power relations that nourished the reforms models that allowed for the founding and operation of their school. Through an analysis of school's experiences during one academic year, this study will begin to illuminate how well-meaning educators were unknowingly members of the "new professional and managerial classes" (Apple, 2001) who ultimately utilized their circuits of privilege within neoliberal contexts to recreate the very inequities they had intended to address and resist as school reformers who valued social justice.

Research as it Unfolds…

The original focus of this study and its research questions were centered on how teachers and administrators within a doubly segregated (by race and class) school enacted race within their particular classrooms and within the school's context that was well-aligned with neoliberal paradigms for school reform. The study was situated in a charter school that was originally funded by philanthrocapitalist start-up monies, and then actively implemented philantrocapitalist curriculums during the academic year of data collection. The data analysis process and the preliminary findings of this study, however, revealed deep, ethical tensions that could have caused harm to the study participants if the micro-level unit of analysis remained at the individual teachers. Additionally, since the majority of research participants were Black teachers and the researcher is white, the analysis and findings potentially threatened to become reifying instances of privilege and white supremacy rather than a study of how race and racism is enacted within a doubly segregated school context contending with neoliberal school reforms. However, since the epistemological undergirding of the study's design included grounded theory, and because grounded theory seeks to construct theory that emerges from the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 2008), a shift in the micro-level unit of analysis allowed for the continuation of data analysis.

The most grounded solution was to situate the case study with the school itself as the sociological, micro-level unit of analysis, rather than reporting on individualized case studies of the teachers and their individual psychologies and lived

experiences with race and racism as the micro-level unit of analysis. And that is perhaps the greatest finding: when studying an individual's lived experiences with race and racism, one will likely discover varying levels of traumatic responses and coping mechanisms due to America's paradigm of dysconscious racism, (King, 1991) and one would be hard-pressed to find an institution where the tacit acceptance of dominant white norms and privileges can be better illuminated than within American public schooling. Within the prison system, and policing more broadly, it is not a tacit acceptance of white supremacy, it is often an overtly, oppressive system of dominant white norms and privileges that functions. In schools, white supremacy and dysconcscious racism can be obscured, but also can come into focus when you look at the systems that must be operationalized at the micro-level of the school.

This study originally sought to create individual, teacher case studies that drew from teachers' personal and historical micro-cultures, their classroom practices, and their engagement with teacher professional development for the academic year when data was collected. The original research question and sub-questions were the following:

What educator practices, particularly around race and ethnicity, are present within doubly segregated school settings given the contexts of neoliberal multiculturalism and accountability as dominant discourses?

1. How do teachers in doubly segregated schools enact race and/or ethnicity within their classroom practices, if they do? Do teachers perceive curriculum, instruction, classroom management, and assessment as

culturally connected to their own and their students' ethnic/racial identities? If so, how?

2. How does the school context influence teacher practice(s) around race and ethnicity? Does the school provide professional development for staff that addresses the race and ethnicity of both staff and students? How do school policies and disciplinary procedures reflect the institutional understandings of the community their serving?
3. How do educators understand the level of educational access and opportunities offered to their students of color within their school and district? How do educators perceive the standardized, assessed outcomes of their students when compared to the inputs and opportunities in their school and district?

These questions proved to be problematic for practical, ethical, and professional reasons, however, when the unit of analysis was focused on individual teachers. The practical reasons centered around power and how race is enacted within our societal structures and systems. When coding and analyzing teachers' individual experiences with race and the formation of their own racial identities based on their life experiences, data consistently suggested that the teachers were experiencing (potentially complex and traumatic) internalizations of white supremacy, whether they identified as Black or white. This manifested differently within different individuals even when they shared similar intersectional aspects of their identities (gender, race, class, sexual orientation, etc.). Some teachers formed limiting beliefs

about themselves and their group identities, and some teachers formed ethics of survival that denied they were victims of macro-level ideologies that actively work to dispossess their potential for thriving futures.

The original study design and scope had not been designed with a trauma-informed lens and this became a weakness that needed to be addressed to protect research participants. While research could be meaningfully designed in order to speak with participants (regardless of individual participant and researcher group identities), this study was best adapted, based on the emerging data, to a systemic unit of analysis with the micro-level as the school instead of as individual teachers. It simply would not have been ethically and professionally responsible as a white, middle-class researcher to make research conjectures around how a Black man, Black woman, or poor whites experience their racial and class identities once the data began to reveal that complex, ideological and collective traumas (which often intersected with individualized traumas) could be possible explanations for some the participants' teaching discourses and classroom practices around race, class, and gender. Again, with a trauma-informed study design and a larger, more diverse research team working together with research participants, it would be possible to re-approach the study design with the individual as the unit of analysis. However, this re-design was not possible within the scope of an individual's dissertation research that was already in-progess. We are all objects and subjects of capitalism and white supremacy within our current neoliberal episteme. The possibility of engaging in complex versions of

"victim blaming" that would not respect the lives and constitutions of research participants was a very real possibility.

Professional case studies that examined teachers' instructional practices were further complicated by the fact that both newly hired instructional leaders for the school year when data collection took place had abandoned their leadership positions and/or duties by the month of February. There was little to no opportunity for teachers to meaningfully engage with a program of professional development because it simply didn't exist in their professional context during the school year when data collection occurred. This was further complicated by the fact that this was a charter school with many teachers who were hired as uncertified instructors. Many had never taken any coursework related to teacher credentialing and/or had even studied education within an undergraduate or graduate level course or program with a university partner. Again though, there were structural and systemic reasons that this practice was allowed, and the research participants were coping on individual levels with varying degrees of resiliency and efficacy. Evaluating teachers' instructional interactions around race and racism within their classrooms as individualized case studies would simply divert the blame from the structures and systems (that provoke and allow for the de-professionalization of teaching) onto the individuals who were themselves objects of the structural and institutional dispossession and failures around them.

However, there is value to staying the course and reflecting on the contextualized experiences of this study's research participants and the ways in which

neoliberal reforms have shaped their professional experiences at the micro-level of their school. To protect research participants, it does not make sense to include their individualized analyses. Because of this, I adopt a method of analytical bifocality (Weis & Fine, 2012) as a means to understanding how linkages between educational policies and the everyday life of teachers within a particular school's context take form and construct material realities for themselves and their students. A literature review that details the macro- and exo- level ecologies of neoliberal school reforms provides the background to understand how this charter school was founded. The analyses that then follow are divided into three separate sections: a structural, empirical analysis of micro-level manifestations of circuits of worth; an ecological analysis of reciprocal relations between the macro-, exo-, meso-, and micro-levels that encapsulated the school's context; and a methodological reflection that focuses on faithful witnessing when researching individuals' racialized, lived experiences within historically dispossessed communities and schools of color.

Even though educational researchers (and many pre-service and practicing educators) openly acknowledge that we live, grow, and work within institutional systems that center qualities of whiteness, maleness, being neurotypical, heteronormative, and privileges those who speak Standard American English, we often can forget to acknowledge how emotionally, physically, and spiritually dysregulating and potentially traumatic it can be to grow up within systems and institutions when you do not identify with and/or share those centered qualities. Collective, group identities that are systematically discriminated against throughout

our country's history are enduring collective traumas and educators should be aware of how trauma manifests in an individual's lived experiences and their behaviors. Educators need to both be aware of and expand their understandings around the causes and effects of trauma in childrens' lives whether the source of the trauma is ideological/macro-cultural or personal/micro-cultural.

> As individuals we are attached to family, group, community, and country—and beyond to world and cosmos—but also to culture, history, and mythopoetic roots. The multiplicity of attachments forms a living organism or network that I envision as a rhizome. The rhizome field is an integral part of being human and participating in both the natural world and in sociocultural evolution. Our brains are formed by the power of being with others within the matrix of these multiple environments. Nothing exists alone; everything affects and is affected. Collective trauma changes the social fabric and cultural self of community, and it affects the structure and functioning of the human mind. Cultures are not isolated but rather in constant relation worldwide, and the rhizome carries that history. Cultural and genetic evolution affect each other, (Riedel, 2017, pp. 137-138).

This study openly leans on post-structural epistemologies and critical analytical frameworks, such as Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Bell, 2005), that have been criticized as deterministic, and more recently criticized by right-wing media and pundits as anti-American (because they challenge the "race neutral" ideals of colorblindness, meritocracy, and the neutrality of the law). Instead, this study situates them as useful tools for excavating what neoliberal paradigmatic thinking and white supremacy look like within educational public policies and at the micro-level cultural setting, such as a school. In that sense, the various methods, theories, and frameworks that have been chosen are meant to construct a meaningful object of reflection for understanding how structural racism and institutional

inequities are perpetuated even when they align with neoliberal reforms that are purported to address and neutralize racial inequities in U.S. schooling.

It is the position of this study that America can improve access to equitable solutions, and the overall health of, its public institutions when a better understanding of the material effects of neoliberalism and the psychic effects of how national ideologies are internalized and reproduced by Americans becomes illuminated. American capitalism within the neoliberal episteme is not broken; it is inherently intended to create accumulation for some while dispossessing communities that serve as a permanent underclass. This study is part of an ongoing conversation in America and asks readers to meaningfully consider its findings around historical dispossession and trauma, the need for ethical, faithful witnessing in research, and new paradigmatic thinking in order to regenerate public schooling in the U.S. It is the position of this study that teacher training and classroom management simply *must* include trauma-informed practices both for the well-being of educators and for the students and families that they serve. The fields of social work and education need to speak to each other more often. In an ever-changing social dynamic that is experiencing collective-level traumas (e.g., an ongoing pandemic, massive wealth inequalities, and racialized police brutality) educators need to know how to work with students who are actively experiencing the effects of trauma(s). Behaviors within classrooms are often the manifestations of acute and complex trauma (for both students and educators), and educators are often working with only half of the possible tools that might help them to de-escalate, calm, and create welcoming, safe

environments for students. Including trauma-informed classroom management methods that are based on the social work literature within teaching certification and credentialing programs should be broadly developed and implemented in U.S. schooling. Trauma does not discriminate against anyone, and every human endures traumatic experiences; teachers need to be better trained and prepared for the coping mechanisms, trauma responses, and internalizations of limiting beliefs that result from being a living human.

Positionality

I came to the Ph.D. program after working in elementary, middle, and high schools in West Philadelphia and on the Southside of Chicago. My career in the field of education began as a Teach for America (TFA) corps member in West Philadelphia. I worked for two years, as a fourth-grade classroom teacher, at a school that was overseen by an "educational management organization" that had been hired by the Pennsylvania State Board of Education. Following my time in West Philadelphia, I returned to my hometown of Chicago and accepted a position as a high school literature teacher at a large charter network school on the Southside (a position I was technically uncertified for since my certification was in elementary education). In both positions, the schools where I taught were struggling to make "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) according to the parameters set forth by the national "No Child Left Behind" educational policies. I have only served as a teacher in doubly segregated schools as the student population at both schools were 99% Black and 99% were on free and reduced price lunch programs.

Although both schools struggled to make AYP, my own classroom and student data were consistently strong for each year that I taught. Yet, even though my data was strong, I was finding classroom teaching to be unsustainable. The amount of differentiation and the individualized and personalized planning that it took to help students make academic gains without professional support as a new teacher was exhausting. However, because of my students' significant gains, I was asked to move up to an instructional coaching position by a rival charter network (also on the Southside of Chicago) and I decided to see if I could find a better fit within a different school-based position. After serving one year in the charter school's administration, with minimal training provided for the increased responsibility, I made the decision to pursue a doctorate in teachers and teacher development at the University of California, Santa Cruz. I believed I would be better able to support teachers in the future if I invested in my own capacity to be of service to them and their students. As I began my Ph.D. program and studied the literature around the educational reform policy landscape, charter schools (and school choice more generally), the school-to-prison pipeline, teacher professional development, and teacher attrition/retention, I began to understand that I knew very little about the reforms that had directly impacted my own teaching trajectory and my ability to sustain myself as a public educator serving low-income, Black students in both West Philadelphia and on the Southside of Chicago. I began to understand that the issues I was facing as an educator were systemic and based upon the neoliberal reform policies that had fully saturated both the Philadelphia School District and Chicago Public Schools. Yet, I

was still most interested in how a teachers' personal micro-cultural experiences showed up in their teaching, instruction, and interactions with students. I wanted to explore how could I leverage my doctoral research to work with individual teachers in doubly segregated school contexts to better reach their students given the resurgence of re-segregation in American society? How did race and racial awareness and racial stress impact classroom interactions? How can we work with teachers so that they can better understand their identities and the identities of their students in ways that facilitate trust and connection?

My background as a former TFA corps member and charter schoolteacher and administrator presented both advantages and challenges in my research on teacher practices in doubly segregated schools. Both teachers and administrators at the charter school in my study (my research participants) were very open with me about their experiences and the frustrations they felt as they did their best to navigate each school day, knowing that I had worked at a doubly segregated charter school on the Southside of Chicago as well. Many of my research participants had also begun their careers as former TFA or teaching corps members, as well, and all of them had chosen to teach at a charter school for the year of my study. My positionality as a white, middle class, female researcher also deeply impacted my study as the majority of my research participants were Black. Two of the three administrators were Black women who had grown up in the surrounding neighborhood and five of my seven teacher participants were Black teachers.

As the school year unfolded and both teacher and administrator attrition became an increasing issue for the school's culture and for consistent school policy implementation, I empathized with both about the effects it had on their capacities to do their jobs. When teachers and administrators spoke to the unsustainability of their positions and to the lack of formalized oversight and support for improving their practices, I could recall my own similar frustrations at not knowing how to better show up to serve my students and colleagues, as I had intended to each day. Additionally, my presence in the school became increasingly visible by both staff and students as the adults in the building became more inconsistent with each instance of mid-year attrition. The faculty and staff were very warm and appreciative of my continued dedication to understanding the school's experiences at professional development sessions and began to see me as "one of them" as the year progressed. Many of them afforded me with insider status as their fellow faculty numbers dwindled with each of my observational visits, and many spoke to the deep trust and openness they felt as they shared their very personal stories regarding their racial backgrounds and how it related to their classrooms and current roles within the school. Many of my Black research participants confided that they were often very uncomfortable having conversations about race and racism with white women, but that I had earned their trust and that they wanted to be as honest with me as possible. Similarly, I wanted to make sure that I was respecting and honoring their journeys. I knew the data needed to speak to their resiliencies and strengths as much as it might point to forms of dysconscious racism and internalized trauma.

As my research progressed throughout the year, this presented my study with many challenges, both practically and ethically. I attended many of their whole school professional development sessions throughout the year, yet without instructional leadership (because one leader quit in November and the other refused to perform this job duty post-February) the sessions did not contribute to teachers' instructional knowledge or their professional development, particularly when it came to understanding the identities of their students. This could not have been predicted and yet it was to be part of my data analysis to code for the alignment (or misalignment) of whole school professional development observations and individual classroom instructional observations. My study sought to explore how the culture of the school and the teacher professional development provided might have contributed to individual teacher practices, alongside their individual micro-cultural experiences growing up. This became ethically problematic though as the teachers experienced little to no professional support and the "personalized learning platform" that the school had adopted in a previous year was not designed for low-income, Black students. Teacher practices were often dictated, if not at least heavily influenced, by the "personalized learning platform" assignments and teachers were doing what they could to tread above water and not drown like their fellow colleagues who had chosen to jump ship mid-year. Making critical conjectures about the instructional and classroom management decisions that Black teachers chose to make during the year of my study became fraught with ethical considerations that had to be taken seriously into account. The data were consistently emerging to suggest that all teachers and

administrators had forms of limiting beliefs that were connected to deep, macro-level, ideological internalizations of anti-Blackness regardless of their racial identities. A dissertation study that detailed these internalized, complex trauma responses began to feel like it would exploit my participants and the trust they had so generously given me as they shared their micro-cultural stories with me. To ethically reciprocate their trust, I needed to find a way to tell their stories that did not blame them for their own lack of professional development when the systems they interacted with had never provided any context or training for understanding neoliberal school reforms and their own positionality within society or within their school's context.

As the data analysis process continued in the years after I had concluded collecting my data at the school, the world around us all began to shift, as well. Raising racial consciousness within larger society became a mainstay within the media as George Floyd was recorded while being beaten to death by a cop in Minneapolis, MN and the Black Lives Matter movement began to gain more momentum. The covid pandemic meant that nearly all schools shifted to online learning, and even though the school in the study should have been well positioned with 1:1 student to technology ratio and a "personalized online learning platform" already in place, the school decided to shut down entirely due to financial issues created by dwindling enrollments within the Chicago Public School system. In other words, the systemic issues were constantly being highlighted throughout the data collection and data analysis processes. My positionality as a white, middle class, female researcher also meant that my understandings of the personal, micro-cultural

experiences that my Black research participants had shared with me, many of whom had grown up in low-income households on the Southside, would likely provide insufficient explanations for how those experiences showed up in their professional practices. And this was especially so because teachers were offered such minimal professional development at the school level during the academic year when my data collection took place. It's also important to keep in mind that, since it was a charter school, the Black male teachers in my study were all uncertified and that they had never had any formal teacher professional development, unless they had received some at a previous school/teaching position. When I began analyzing the issues that the teachers and administrators in my study faced contextually and ecologically at the school, it became clear that the system and systemic public policies were the root causes creating the conditions that allowed for the school's experiences to unfold in the ways in which they did. Ultimately, (re)creating school failure and providing another complex trauma event as students and teachers were again dispossessed by an institution that was purported to serve the surrounding community on the Southside.

Faithful witnessing[1] would become a necessary lens for interpreting the data from my study as I recognized that many of my research participants were

[1] Lugones (2003), in her book Pilgrimaces/Peregrinajes, describes the concepts of "faithful witnessing" and "world traveling." "To witness faithfully is difficult, given the manyness of worlds of sense related through power so that oppressive and fragmenting meaning saturate many worlds of sense in hard to detect ways. A collaborator witnesses on the side of power, while a faithful witness witnesses against the grain of power, on the side of resistance. To witness faithfully, one must be able to sense resistance, to interpret behavior as resistant even when it is dangerous, when that interpretation places on psychologically against common sense, or when one is moved to act in collision with common sense, with oppression. Faithful witnessing leads one away from a monosensical life. One ceases to have expectations, desires, and beliefs that fit one for a life in allegiance with oppression." (Lugones, 2003, p. 7).

dysconscious and/or unconscious of how race was enacted in their classrooms and school even though many had grown up with similar backgrounds to the students attending the school. My positionality as a former charter schoolteacher and administrator afforded me trust, yet my positionality as a white, middle class, female researcher meant that I was differently situated and that I could miss nuances and complexities given my study's design. To continue with an individualized analysis based on individual teacher and administrator experiences, I would be overly reliant on my background as a former charter schoolteacher and administrator to understand my data. Faithful witnessing meant that I needed to shift my focus instead to the systemic and institutional contexts that created the conditions for the origin and eventual failure of the school as a story of dispossession instead of focusing on individual teachers and their coping mechanisms for surviving in a system that proved unsustainable and traumatic.

Organization of the Study

The remainder of this chapter clarifies terminology and underlying paradigmatic thinking that are critical for understanding this study. This study is one story of how complex issues can converge within the system of public schooling to create further dispossession within a historically dispossessed community; it is not the only story of how these complex issues converge, however. This study is not meant to be a reckoning on all types of charter schools and their efficacy towards educational equity. Instead, it is the story of how neoliberal reform movements and social entrepreneurs coalesced their influence and circuits of power/worth to create

one school's context that eventually failed to be sustainable or scalable. There are many types of charter schools and some are deeply embedded within communities, are designed to resist neoliberal reforms, and do provide high-quality educational solutions for some students. This study is not meant to serve as an indictment on all charter schools and it does not speak to the origin and purposes of any charter school other than its own. It is intended to serve as a singular object of reflection that traces macro-level ideologies into a micro-level school community to explore how neoliberal logics and circuits of worth are activated and then discusses their consequences.

Chapter Two details and explains the theoretical alignments, epistemologies, and ontological roots of this qualitative research study. It serves to outline the methodological commitments and methods of the study's original design and includes a discussion of Critical Race Theory and how its tenets apply to this study's design. The study utilizes a critical bifocality for understanding how macro-level contexts, conditions, and ideologies shape the exo-level and micro-level fields of possibilities when interactivity between the nested ecological levels occurs. Chapter Three then explains the macro-level contexts of the contemporary reform climate in educational public policy formation to detail how neoliberal logics around accountability, school choice, and Black educational experiences are woven together. This chapter sets the context for the empirical analysis which follows in Chapter Four by offering a thick-description of macro-level (national) and exo-level (Chicago Public Schools as the

municipal school district) reform cultures which led to the creation of the charter school in this study.

Chapter Four is an empirical analysis which explores the lived experiences of educators within a stand-alone charter school in an historically dispossessed Chicago community and the micro-level manifestations of neoliberal logics and circuits of worth within the school's experiences. The findings include a discussion that explores how neoliberal aligning reformers utilize circuits of privilege within the context-dependent field of possibilities to win approval for founding the charter school in this study. The chapter then continues with an analysis of why the school's climate and culture results in a dysfunctional institution and why its own leaders came to believe the school was "predestined for failure." Chapter Five extends the empirical analysis to detail the interactivity from the micro-level manifestations to the exo-level and macro-level contextual and cultural conditions that shape educational school reform possibilities in a neoliberal episteme.

Chapter Six offers methodological reflections and lessons from conducting a study on race in a doubly segregated school micro-level culture. Ethical tensions that arose during the data collection and data analysis processes significantly impacted the author and this chapter serves as a critical reflection on how "faithful witnessing" converged with grounded theory to offer a way to reconcile sensitive data and findings during a dissertation study. This chapter provides space for a philosophical reflection on inhabiting multiple identities and making sure, to the best of one's ability, that research does not become an instrument of whiteness and further

accumulation that would do a disservice, or even potential harm, to educators of color who volunteered to be research participants. The study concludes with Chapter Seven which includes pedagogical implications based on neoliberal circuits of worth and the potential for institutional trauma that results from compounded, historical dispossession within low-income communities of color when public institutions fail to meet the needs of those they are purported to serve.

1.2 Theoretical Groundwork & Foundational Thinking

Before moving forward, it is necessary to provide a framework for understanding critical concepts, approaches, and terminology as this study will utilize them in the pursuit of creating an empirical, bifocal object of reflection. While there is certainly a multiplicity of ways that one could approach these concepts, approaches, and terminologies, it is necessary to clarify how they are situated within this study's particular theoretical approach and framework. Additionally, it should be understood that as a post-structuralist piece of scholarship, this study makes no claims to having chosen a singular or "correct" way to have interpreted and conceived of these concepts, approaches, and terminology, only that it is vital and necessary to describe how they are understood and utilized for a rational and mutual understanding of the study's progressions and findings as neoliberal educational reforms are investigated.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems

Foundational to the study is the concept of nested, ecological systems from Bronfenbrenner (1979). The analyses will mirror the ecological systems that

Bronfenbrenner proposed for human development. The bifocality of design will focus first on the macro-level systems and the attitudes and ideologies of American's neoliberal, capitalist episteme. The

exo-level systems will focus on the Chicago Public School (CPS) system and the city itself.

Figure 1.1: *Brofenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory*

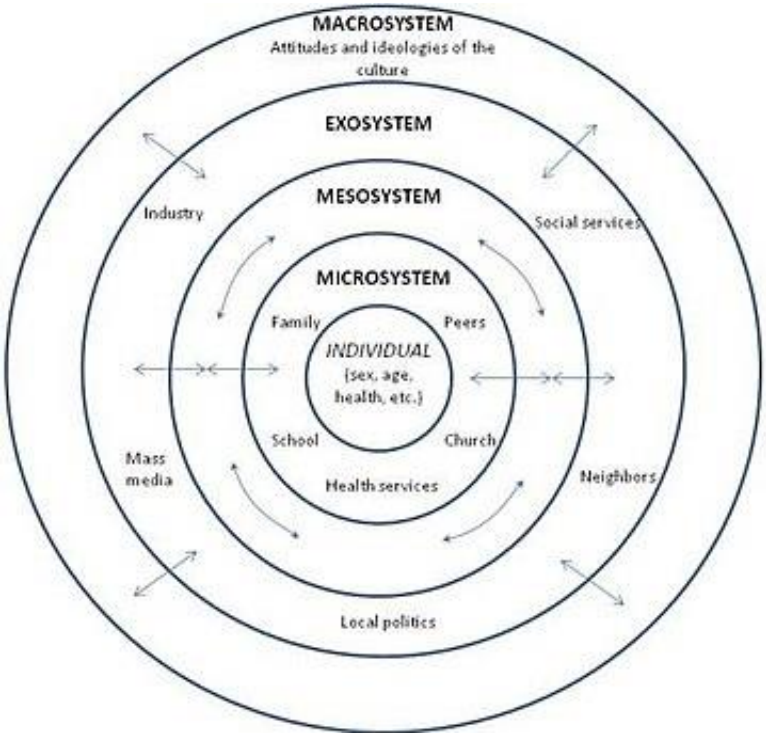


Figure 1. Brofenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. (2021, May 10). Adapted from Wikipedia. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecological_systems_theory*

The exo-level system analyses will be provided to show how macro-level ideologies move from the larger culture to micro-level systems. The micro-level system is conceptualized as the school. Individual educators who participated in one-on-one

interviews for the study will provide context for understanding the school's micro-level cultural system. The meso-level systems include the interactions and interactivity between the macro- system, exo-system, and micro-system/culture and will be examined in a later section.

Braided, Capitalist Ideologies as a Moving Substrate

White supremacy, liberalism, and paternalism are understood as an entwining and braided ideological paradigm of hegemonic and ontological beliefs within capitalist American society, both historically and currently. Simply put, within American society, they go together, they strengthen one another, they justify each other, and are difficult to separate. They form the moving (and fluid) substrate that is both diffuse, yet often unseen as it nourishes power relations within the current neoliberal episteme, both within the United States and around the World. Racism (conceived of as a verb, because what it does is what is important for reflection) relies upon the interaction between these ideologies and power. Without power, and without capitalism defining personhood as property ownership, these ideologies would not be able to create circuits of worth; they would be inert and useless.

> From the dawn of capitalism, white supremacy was mobilized for the accumulation of capital, launching the long-term historical structures and ideologies that made capitalism a world system and that continue to shape the economy and social life today. The centrality of white supremacy to neoliberal accumulation strategies is the present-day iteration of this dynamic. Neoliberal social policies and methods of governance that enable capital accumulation are created, instituted, and organized through the cumulative effects of past discrimination and structural racism. (Lipman, 2017, pp. 4-5).

Similarly, without one another, these ideologies on their own would not be nearly as threatening, dehumanizing, and contradictory to the American values of meritocracy, equality, and freedom.

White supremacy (as normalized, centered whiteness) is understood as a hierarchical ideology *and* a normalizing ontological orientation that has organized American capitalism and society. Similar to Gillborn (2006), this study agrees with his assertions that,

> Most white people would probably be surprised by the idea of "White-World"; they would see only 'world', its white-ness is invisible to them because the racialized nature of politics, policing, education and every other sphere of public life is so deeply ingrained that it has become normalized – un-remarked, and taken for granted. This is an exercise of power that goes beyond notions of 'white privilege' and can only be adequately understood through a language of power and domination: the issue goes beyond privilege, it is about *supremacy.* (p. 319).

White supremacy also embraces racial cultural determinism, the idea that race-linked behaviors and attitudes explain racial inequality in the United States, as natural (Fine and Ruglis, 2009). This dangerous line of thinking alleges the Black-white economic gap is due not to an acutely uneven playing field but the blacks' deficient skills, training, and motivation," (Darity & Mullen, 2020, p. 30).

Complicating societal manifestations of white supremacy is the fact that one need not be white themselves to unconsciously, or consciously, harbor views of whiteness as superior. This fact should be a testimony to how pervasive, flexible, and socially stratifying white supremacy is both within American society and within individual experiences. It continues to operate even as racialization, and the privilege and stigma it confers, no longer depends on phenotype (Melamed, 2011).

"Rather…categories of privilege and stigma determined by ideological, economic, and cultural criteria have overlaid older, conventional race categories to the extent that traditionally recognized racial identities – black, Asian, white, Arab – occupy both sides of the privilege/stigma divide," (Melamed, 2011, p.13). "Whiteness" is on the move, but white supremacy is still the underlying ontological orientation and ideological paradigm that facilitates its flexibility, pervasiveness, and ability to remain a categorizing measure beyond the color line. White supremacy could not do this alone, however; white supremacy depends upon the "egalitarian" ideology of liberalism to maintain its hegemony.

This study understands that neoliberalism (the ideological orientation of the free market as equalizer) could not have happened without the socially democratic or welfarist conceptions of liberalism being perceived of as having "failed." However, in agreement with Mills (2008), this study understand that liberalism in American society was always a "racial liberalism." "Racial liberalism, or white liberalism is the actual liberalism that has been historically dominant since modernity: a liberal theory whose terms originally restricted full personhood to whites (or, more accurate, white men) and relegated nonwhites to an inferior category, so that its schedule of rights and prescriptions for justice were all color-coded," (Mills, 2008, p.1382). The ideology of white supremacy cannot be disentangled from liberalism in America's capitalist history.

Michael Apple's (2001) explanation helps to contextualize Mills' "racial liberalism" when he explains that,

> It needs to be recognized that such classic liberalism did call into question an entire array of hierarchical privileges and arrangements that made individual advancement extremely difficult…Furthermore, there can be no doubt that grounding in a belief that "mankind" had natural rights that government could not legitimately violate enabled disenfranchised women, paid workers, and slaves to challenge the social and educational barriers they constantly faced. Yet, having said this, it is equally important to note that republicanism and classical liberalism were also grounded in a belief that only certain kinds of persons were actually capable of exercising the rights of freedom…Given the central place that self-direction and self-government held in these ideas of freedom those who were not able to control their own lives should not be given a voice in governance. In this way economic independence became a defining element in political freedom. Freedom and property became intertwined, and economic independence became the identificatory sign of being worthy. (pp. 13 – 14).

Circuits of worth (Melamed, 2011; Ong, 2006) dictated how paternalistic those who were enfranchised with the powers of governance acted towards those who were legally disenfranchised. This is how the braiding together of ideologies operates when they are infused with power and utilized to determine differentiated circuits of worth.

American paternalism is consistent with liberal, capitalistic frames that have historically equated property ownership with personhood (defined as a person with economic independence within a capitalist system). In Stephanie Jones-Rogers' (2019) book entitled, *They Were Her Property*: *White Women as Slave Owners in the American South*, Jones-Roger's argued that southern, white women who owned slaves had a surprising number of privileges over southern, white women who did not own slaves. Slave owning white women in the South were not entirely "subjects" under the marriage laws of coverture; their slaves and/or land did not automatically become their husband's property when they married. Often, chancery courts would

uphold white women's rights to their slaves (property ownership as personhood) as their sole property even when a husband's creditors would sue because the husband was bankrupt or defaulting with his creditors (Jones-Rogers, 2019). American capitalism, even in the antebellum South, meant that property ownership, in this case land and/or slaves, defined personhood before the law, even for white women prior to the Civil War. White women who did not inherit or own land and/or slaves were fully subject to the laws of coverture and were deemed the property of their husbands. Historically, the right to self-direction and self-government (personhood) under the law within American capitalism has always been directly tied to white property ownership, or property-laden circuits of worth. Those who did not own property relied on the "paternalism" of those who were property owners to make decisions for their governance, although many times those decisions were overtly oppressive and denied their rights of personhood.

American society has made progress. It is for this reason that this study challenges conceptions of American institutions as inherently and endemically racist. Individuals and collectives can reflect on the ways in which their ideological paradigms and commitments impact others and make new choices. As an American collective, we have accomplished greater levels of enfranchisement and equality throughout our history. It is not without struggle. It is not without critical reflection. It is not without a moral leadership that applies truth to power, but it does happen, and it can happen again when critical reflection on societal circuits of worth and the

resulting power relations expose American's ideological moving substrate and its effects on the educational imaginary of America as a meritocracy.

Power

Power is at the center of the analyses yet is not reduced to domination or contrasted as resistance (Deacon, 1998). Power within institutional settings is conceived of in a Foucauldian sense as "strategies of governance,"

> Power as strategies of governance conceives of power and knowledge in the form of a web, 'a fine, differentiated, continuous network'- institutionally supported, knowledge-producing and discipline-effecting relays - 'that connects points and intersects with its own skein': simultaneously vertical and horizontal, hierarchal and lateral, with nodes and interstices in multiple, complex, and contested interconnections such that what is dominate or subordinate is not always clearly apparent even if always potentially present…" (Deacon, 1998, pp. 144-145).

This conceptualization of institutional power, as fluid, web-like, mutable, and as a sort of current and/or electricity that uniquely creates circuits of worth within neoliberal multiculturalism (Melamed, 2011) is consistent with the framings of a "differentiated citizenry" (Ong, 2006) and Weis & Fine's (2012) concepts of "circuits of privilege" and Fine & Ruglis' (2009) "circuits of dispossession." Essentially, neoliberal ideological commitments lead to the creation of circuits of worth, through strategies of governance, and decide who is worthy of circuits of privilege and who is subjected to circuits of dispossession (Weis & Fine, 2012). This happens as circuits of worth, simultaneously attentive to both structures and individual lives, determine the power relations amongst one another in "critical interactions between sociopolitical formations, and what takes place on the ground," (Weis & Fine, 2012, p. 2). The neoliberal episteme is constituted of these circuits of worth and cannot be

understood without conceptualizing how power operates and creates "intersecting relations of force," (Foucault, as cited in Deacon, 1998). These "intersecting relations of force" occur constantly at all societal levels (macro-, exo-, and micro-level systems) and throughout the social body, but this study will focus upon when structures and individuals intersect and interact within the government institution of public schooling.

> In projects focused on the relation of power to education, we should be careful neither to underestimate nor to overestimate the depth of power as domination. We *underestimate* power when we miss the way that it works to set the terms for being itself. We *overestimate* power when we assume that its reality is the only one, and that its terms are the ones we must settle for in the process of contesting it. But the struggles of oppressed people have demonstrated a reality beyond the one that power recognizes, a reality in which those who have been injured rise again, undeterred, and in which power has not been able to control the terms of self and spirit. (De Lissovoy, 2011, p. 479).

Neoliberal school reforms, in essence, become a "strategy of governance." Power (that is fed by our ideological moving substate) will be referred to throughout this text as circuits of worth, circuits of privilege, and circuits of dispossession. The power relations that are the effects of these intersecting circuits will be elaborated in much more detail as it is appropriate to understanding and analyzing the interactions amongst macro-level, neoliberal structures and between exo-level and micro-level groups and individuals.

The "Moving Substrate" as Racialized Power

> But what if – not merely episodically and randomly but systemically and structurally – the personhood of some persons was historically disregarded and their rights disrespected? What if entitlements and justice were, correspondingly, so conceived of that the unequal treatment of these persons, or subpersons, was not seen as unequal, not flagged as internal inconsistency,

> but accommodated by suitable discursive shifts and conceptual framings? And what if, after long political struggles, there developed at last a seeming equality that later turned out to be more nominal than substantive, so that justice and equal protection were still effectively denied even while being triumphantly proclaimed? It would mean that we would need to recognize the inadequacy of speaking in the abstract of liberalism and contractarianism. We would need to acknowledge that race has underpinned the liberal framework from the outset, reflecting the sense of crucial terms, embedding a particular model of rights bearers, dictating a certain historical narrative, and providing an overall theoretical orientation for normative discussions. We would need to confront the fact that to understand the actual logic of these normative debates, both what is said and what is not said, we would have to understand not just the ideal, abstract social contract but also its incarnation in the United States (and arguably elsewhere) as a nonideal, racial contract. (Mills, 2008, pp. 1381-1382).

The ideological moving substrate (of white supremacy, liberalism, and paternalism) was/is created by/has been perpetuated by liberalism and the idea of liberal social contracts that the United States inherited from European philosophy and societies. Mills (2008) argues that liberalism in the United States is really (and always has been) a racial liberalism that is an agreement amongst "white contractors to subordinate and exploit non-white noncontractors for white benefit," (p.1381). Whiteness within the neoliberal episteme is not entirely dependent on phenotype, however (Melamed, 2011). Admittedly, the moving substrate makes any empirical analysis of race and class at the macro-, exo-, and micro-levels, and certainly any analyses that focus on their intersections, progressively more complex. White supremacy can re-invent itself and finds ways to hide by complicating what it means to align with whiteness.

Similar to CRT, this study understands whiteness (the phenotype) and whiteness as property (cultural codes of worth that create circuits of privilege and

dispossession) to rely upon a moving substrate of American ideological logics (white supremacy, liberalism, and paternalism) that is complex, flexible, and unique tailored each new episteme. In neoliberal multiculturalism, "Racialization converts the effects of differential value-making processes into categories of difference that make it possible to order, analyze, describe, and evaluate what emerges out of force relations as the permissible content of other domains of U.S. modernity (e.g., law, politics, and economy)," (Melamed, 2011, p. 11). Singh's (2004) definition of race as "historic repertoires and cultural and signifying systems that stigmatize and depreciate one form of humanity for the purposes of another's health, development, safety, profit or pleasure," (p. 223), along with Singh's (2017) assertion of "Racial classification…as a flexible rubric for collectively marking and also individualizing a kind of "anticivilizational chaos," (p. 137), can help us to understand that a biological phenotype is no longer the sole marker of racialized, ideological logics (the moving substrate) and circuits of dispossession, although phenotype has mattered historically and continues to even as we claim to be a post-racial society. "Even in the so-called liberal North, race still segregates more than class," (Guinier, 2004, p. 93). The braided ideologies always constitute the substrate, but the substrate can morph and disguise itself according to epistemic, capitalist needs for power relations to sway towards whiteness.

Race and racialization in the United States are exceedingly complex, fluid, and based on the historical and material effects of circuits of worth. "Many critical race scholars recognize that poverty and race intersect in complex ways…White

poverty – except, perhaps, for the rural kind – usually lasts only for a generation or two, even for white immigrant families. Not so for black or brown poverty – it is apt to last forever," (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p.119). It is the historical circuits of worth that feed on the "moving substrate" of ideological racialization within the neoliberal context of educational reforms that this study hopes to illuminate through its empirical macro-, exo- and micro-level analyses. Race and racialization flexibly contort, but never entirely transform out of paradigms that allow for white supremacy (and anti-Blackenss) in America's history. "Evolving strategies of capital accumulation have shaped racial discourses and how racism is structured, experienced, and legitimated, e.g., from legal segregation and Black Codes to civil rights to liberal multiculturalism and colorblind racism," (Lipman, 2017, p. 5). Within the neoliberal episteme, we need to understand that circuits of worth (the web-like, currents of power) are nourished by a moving substrate (of braided ideologies) that are situated upon a mantle of a nonideal, domination contract as a philosophical and ontological orientation (Mills, 2008) that needs to be critically examined and demystified.

> The historical reality is completely obfuscated in the myth of an all-inclusive contract creating a sociopolitical order presided over by a neutral state equally responsive to all its colorless citizens. Far from being neutral, the law and the state were part of the racial polity's apparatus of subordination, codifying whiteness (Haney Lopez) and enforcing racial privilege…Despite the passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, post-bellum abolition did not lead to juridical and moral equalization, because withdrawal of federal troops following the Hayes-Tilden compromise of 1877 restored southern blacks to the mercies of their former owners, and formal segregation was given federal sanction through the 1896 decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, not to be overturned until 1954 (Litwack). Discriminatory legislation codified the inferior legal status of people of color; the state functioned as a racial

> state, enforcing segregation in federal bureaucracies, prisons, and the army (King); and national narratives and dominant white moral psychology took white superiority for granted. (Mills, 2008, pp. 1389 – 1390).

The fact that it took educational reforms to strike down the concept of "separate, but equal" in the 1954 *Brown versus The Board of Education* (Brown I) speaks to the circuits of worth (power) that educational public policy, educational reform movements, and individualized rights to educational sovereignty hold in Americans' imaginaries and within American society. Yet, "the fact is that fifty years later, many of the social, political, and economic problems that the legally trained social engineers thought the Court had addressed through *Brown* are still deeply embedded in our society," (Guinier, 2004, p. 92). The history of the denial of rights to an education for Black Americans during slavery, and the segregation, desegregation, and resegregation that followed, will all be explored as the macro-historical contexts that created the field of possibilities within the current neoliberal educational reform movement for the charter school where this study took place. The commonsense narrative of urban schools as "failing schools" will help to explain why neoliberal reforms that appear race neutral are the preferred models utilized in doubly segregated school contexts within our current educational realities.

The Racial Context of this Study

This study focuses on circuits of worth that result from circuits of privilege and circuits of dispossession in a doubly segregated charter school in Chicago. This study does not wish to reinforce a Black-white binary of racialization; however, those were the self-identifications of the research participants and researcher. Additionally,

the school's demographic was 98% African American and 95% low income for the year that data was collected. The majority of the teachers in the study (5 of 7 participants) were Black teachers with the remaining teachers identifying as white. The educational administrators at the school for the year of data collection included one white female and two Black females serving as Principals/Instructional leaders of the school. The researcher conducting the study is a white researcher who grew up in the surrounding suburbs of Chicago and served as a teacher and administrator in Chicago before pursuing educational research full-time. The macro-historical contexts will center both historical Black experiences (prior to 1983) and neoliberal educational reform logics (post-1983) that deeply impacted Black experiences within U.S. public schooling, but the post-structural orientation of the study recognizes that a critical, bifocality of macro-historical and micro-contextualized analyses could be applied to any and all historically marginalized and dispossessed groups within America with similar, yet uniquely divergent timelines and material effects.

Neoliberal Multiculturalism and Third Wave Capitalism as "Common Sense"

Jodi Melamed, in her 2011 book titled, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism*, theorized neoliberal multiculturalism as America's current phase of official "liberal antiracism," or what Mills (2008) might term "white liberalism."

> Neoliberal multiculturalism has responded to the reconfiguration of state powers and boundaries under global capitalism by portraying the United States as an ostensibly multicultural democracy and the model for the entire world, but in a way that has posited neoliberal restructuring across the globe to be a key to a post-racist world of freedom and opportunity. In doing so, neoliberalism has revealed itself to be more than just an economic theory.

> Rather, it encompasses the entire complex of social, political, and cultural norms and knowledges that organize contemporary regimes of rule and becomes a name for the differentiated experience of citizenship that ensures that governments protect those who are valuable to capital, whether formally citizens or not, and that they render vulnerable those who are not valuable within circuits of capital, whether formally citizens or not. Neoliberal multiculturalism has created new privileged subjects, racializing the beneficiaries of neoliberalism as worthy multicultural citizens and racializing the losers as unworthy and excludable on the basis of monoculuturalism, deviance, inflexibility, criminality, and other historico-cultural deficiencies. (Melamed, 2011, p. xxi).

Melamed's conceptualization of neoliberal multiculturalism is important because it moves the idea of neoliberalism from comprising an economic system to an all-encompassing, globalizing, macro-level, cultural system. It's not just that those who are marginalized, because they are not deemed valuable within circuits of capital/worth, suffer economically, they suffer through each of America's social fields and within her public institutions. When Melamed's concept of neoliberal multiculturalism is utilized in tandem with Ehrenreich's concept of Third Wave Capitalism, we begin to understand how white supremacy, liberalism, and paternalism braid together to comprise the moving substrate that nourishes the neoliberal episteme and paradigmatic thinking that allows a "post-racial" American culture to create circuits of privilege for those citizens are differentiated as worthy, and conversely creates circuits of dispossession for the exclusion and containment of citizens who are stigmatized as unworthy. Circuits of dispossession remain along racial lines even though neoliberal multiculturalism claims to be a post-racial project.

> Neoliberal rationality induces governments to think and act non-governmentally, that is, as businesses whose business is to engineer and manage human, organizational, legal, and natural resources to maximize value and optimize productivity. Neoliberalism becomes recognizable as a mode of

> rationalizing biological and social life when we attend to the violence it inflicts upon human beings and communities in the name of economic restructuring. (Melamed, 2011, p. 147).

While "neoliberal multiculturalism" will be the term utilized throughout this discussion to reference neoliberal contexts, it is vital to understand the uniquely American progression of capitalism that allowed for neoliberal sensibilities to become "common sense."

John Ehrenreich, in his 2016 book titled *Third Wave Capitalism*, theorizes that America has progressed beyond both industrial capitalism (nineteenth century) and corporate capitalism (first two-thirds of the twentieth century) and has given way to "Third Wave Capitalism" (mid-1970s to present). Ehrenreich's (2016) use of the term "Third Wave Capitalism" is partially based on the blurring of boundaries between business and government and public and private sectors.

> The Industrial Revolution was the overwhelmingly dominant force in shaping the era of Industrial Capitalism, and the rise of the giant corporation was equally central to the era of Corporate Capitalism. But no one institution or process dominates the changes of recent decades. If anything, in Third Wave Capitalism the boundaries between institutions and between processes – between business and government, money and politics, profit and nonprofit, race and class, war and peace, police and military, private and public, cultural practice and commodification, male and female – are increasingly blurry. The very vagueness of "Third Wave" turns out to be descriptive. (Ehrenreich, 2016, p.19).

Additionally, Ehrenreich believes that Third Wave Capitalism can help to explain current contradictions within American society.

> Conceptualizing the last five decades as the onset of a new phase in the history of American capitalism helps resolve and explain the apparent contradictions of recent history – the growth of poverty amid growing wealth, the apotheosis of individual freedom and the paralysis of democracy, the election of a black president and the incarceration of a million black men, the

> increase in educational attainment and the growing mismatch between student skills and the needs of the job market, and the increasingly sophisticated medical technology and the decline in health indicators compared to other affluent countries. (Ehrenreich, 2016, p.5).

Situating neoliberal economics and market-based reforms inside of this distinctly American version of capitalism's progression differentiates it from similar terms such as neoliberal capitalism, financial capitalism, late capitalism, or global capitalism.

The term 'neoliberal multiculturalism,' borrowed from Melamed (2011) for the purposes of this study, should also be understood to include the logics and sensibilities of Ehrenreich's concept of Third Wave Capitalism. Both concepts are utilized within this study to focus on the distinctly American experiences of these economic and socio-political rationalizations. Although some of the same neoliberal, market-based changes are occurring throughout the world, America's democracy is dealing with the blurring of public and private in ways that are particular to the U.S. and American society.

Corporations and non-profits look more and more alike as non-profits are increasingly seen as a "variant form of business enterprise" and many are "thoroughly integrated into the for-profit business system," (Ehrenreich, 2016, p.23). The role of technology, the triumph of neoliberal ideologies and market-based solutions to all societal problems, the primacy of the individual over community needs, the intimacy of the government with private industry, "rent-seeking" wealth accumulation through power over government and private institutions, a shifting of resources from the poor to the rich, and a retreat from public efforts to address social problems are hallmarks of Ehrenreich's (2016) concept of Third Wave Capitalism.

> In such an insidious and covert context, power wielders shape our "democratic" schools with little democratic participation. In this political domain, those with the most power dictate purpose. Hinchey argues that in the contemporary United States, those with the most power are business and corporate leaders and their political allies who in the language of standards specify the types of workers they want…Control of schooling is in the process of passing from internal to external forces such as corporations and businesses. (Kincheloe & Weil, as cited in Thomas, 2012, p. 46)

Clearly, this shift has major implications for education and schooling within Chicago (and the U.S.) as unelected, corporate elites are appointed to hybridized (private-public) school boards that replace previously elected local school councils (Ewing, 2018; Lipman; 2007).

The corporate capitalism of the 1950s and 1960s had far clearer lines between government and private institutions. The debate surrounding education as a public or private good has been ongoing throughout our history as a nation (Labaree, 1997). This study recognizes that our current neoliberal educational reform culture is one where our public system is increasingly shifting and becoming privatized through "common sense," market-based reforms (Goodman, 2006; Lipman, 2004; Mc Donald, 2014; Pedroni, 2007; Ravitch 2010).

> For a shift of this magnitude to occur required the prior construction of political consent across a sufficiently large spectrum of the population to win elections. What Gramsci calls 'common sense' (defined as 'the sense held in common') typically grounds consent. Common sense is constructed out of long-standing practices of cultural socialization often rooted deep in regional or national traditions. It is not the same as the 'good sense' that can be constructed out of critical engagement with the issues of the day. Common sense can, therefore, be profoundly misleading, obfuscating, or disguising real problems under cultural prejudices. (Harvey, 2005, p. 39).

The shift from a public to a public-private system has been underway with seemingly little resistance to this paradigm shift. The concept of ever-expanding marketplaces is

commonplace (including within previously held public goods like educational institutions and prisons) and so it has become "common sense" to American sensibilities to accept public-private power relations as the norm.

Post-Racial Imaginaries and Anti-Blackness as Neoliberal Common Sense

The election of Barack Obama in 2008 provided evidence for some Americans that U.S. society is now a post-racial society. "For many citizens, including a significant segment of the African American population, Barack Obama's election does mean that the time has come to foreclose the discourse on race," (Teasley & Ikard, 2010, p.411). Indeed, Obama was generally silent on race when addressing the nation. In the first two years of his presidency, Obama spoke less about issues of race and poverty than other Democratic presidents for more than a generation (Harris, 2014). While it is certainly important and historic for America to have elected a Black president, post-racial thinking and discourse are dangerous. "Moreover, a 2008 Pew Research poll shows that nearly half (45%) of African Americans born to middle-income parents during the post-civil rights era have descended into near poverty or poverty as adults," (Younge, as cited in Teasley & Ikard, 2010, p.421). Racial inequality is still very much a reality within the U.S. and needs to be acknowledged and problematized so that policymakers can craft public policies that work to dismantle structural barriers for stigmatized citizens instead of exacerbating structural dispossessions. In a recent article from "The Guardian" that reported the finding from a study on wealth inequality, researchers found that, "In 2019, the median wealth level for a white family with children in the US was

$63,838. The same statistic for a Black family with children was $808. Hispanic families with kids fare little better. They have a median wealth of $3,175, which equates to 5 cents for every dollar of wealth in an equivalent white household," (The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2021/sep/02/us-wealth-inequality-black-hispanic-children).

The housing crisis of 2008 provides a stark example of the structural conditions that create circuits of dispossession for Black families in America.

> The opening of housing and credit markets to middle- and working-class African Americans coincided with the exploitation of risky financial instruments, subprime mortgages, and derivative schemes. Although it appeared for a time that some people of color were finally able to finance the American Dream of home ownership, it was, in fact, the global financial class that benefitted from originating loans that reset beyond borrowers' capacities and from speculating from mortgage debt. When the scheme crashed, the loss due to foreclosures represented the single-largest decline of black wealth in U.S. history, while multinational banking and financial sectors were bailed out by the government. (Melamed, 2011, p.155).

Since the crisis, it's become clear that Black families were specifically targeted for subprime mortgage schemes. The risk models that were attached to mortgage-backed securities associated with the subprime mortgage crisis were what Cathy O'Neil (2017) in her book entitled, *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy,* termed "weapons of math destruction" (WMDs). In other words, the banking class knew they were targeting and optimizing African American communities for failure. It's a prime example of what Dr. Safiya Umoja Noble, the author of *Algorithms of Oppression* (2018) calls "algorithmic impact."

> The way we know about algorithmic impact is by looking at the outcomes. For example, when Americans are bet against and selected and optimized for failure…so it's like looking for a particular profile of people who can get a sub-prime mortgage…and kinda betting against their failure and then foreclosing on them and wiping out their wealth…that was an algorithm game that came out of Wall Street. During the [2008] mortgage crisis, you had the largest wipe out of black wealth in the history of the United States. Just like that. This is what I mean by algorithmic oppression. The tyranny of those types of practices of discrimination have just become opaque. (Kantayya, 2020).

Big data are not viewed as inherently "racist" or "prejudiced," and the mathematical models are seen as (and believed to be) a neoliberal market reform that equalizes opportunities. However, the mathematical models are using historical data that is based on the past, and based on the assumption that the past will repeat itself (O'Neil, 2017). In a sense, the historical data being fed into the mathematical models represent past, prejudicial data that's being used to optimize how these algorithms sort and categorize Americans. Technically, a computer can't be racist, however, the data the computer is fed often is based on particular profiles that target low-income communities and communities of color. The subprime mortgage crisis represents one of the largest circuits of dispossession for Black wealth accumulation in American history, yet the banking and financial classes who caused the downfall simultaneously held onto their circuits of privilege and accumulation.

> This paradox exposes the dual face of economic crisis – real and constructed. There is a real structural crisis of capitalism – long-term stagnation and over accumulation – for which neoliberalism, financialization, and globalization were meant to be 'fixes.' These fixes triggered the global financial crisis of 2008. And these is a real municipal debt crisis as debt-financed city governments experience drastic cuts in revenue. But the fiscal crisis is also fictional because the money is there to fund public goods. Untaxed corporate and financial profits and financial markets, subsidies to real estate developers, bloated military spending, tax breaks for the rich, and the enormous wealth of

> venture capitalists/philanthropists are all untapped sources of public revenue. (Lipman, 2015, p. 248).

When Black American families actively sought to access the imaginary of the American Dream (circuits of worth, privilege, and accumulation), many lost not only their homes, but their entire financial savings. In a capitalist society that equates property ownership with personhood on philosophical levels, the outcomes were traumatic and devastating for middle- and working-class communities of all colors, but were particularly targeted towards Blacks due to "race neutral" algorithms based on historically prejudiced data. To add insult to injury, the "deficit" is then individualized as a personal failure of irresponsibility instead of understood as a structural failure of the banking industry and governmental, public policies.

A post-racial, neoliberal multicultural America also supports the foundational imaginaries of meritocracy and individualism. Dumas (2016), specifically in regard to the realities of Black Americans, explains,

> In this nation that has ostensibly advanced beyond Black and white, it is the Black that becomes anachronistic, an impediment to the realization of Americans' national-popular imagination of who "we" want to be. Even as the nation (and indeed, the world) embraces a certain kind of multiculturalism, people strain against the dark. (pp.11-12)

Americans want to believe that America is post-racial. Dumas (2016) continues to explain the concept of anti-Blackness,

> That is, even as race continues to structure capitalism, which in turn facilitates white accumulation, the official stance of the state is against racism; blatantly racist laws and government practices have been declared illegal, and the market embraces outreach to a wide multicultural range of consumers. In this context, there is a rush to celebrate the social and economic advancement of select Black individuals and, perhaps more significantly, the success of other groups of people of color. In fact, it is the social and cultural inclusion of

> non-Black people of color that is often offered as evidence of the end of racial animus and racial barriers in society. Therefore, the failure of large swaths of the Black population is purported to be a result of cultural deficits within the Black. (p.15)

The imaginary of America as a meritocratic, individualist, and post-racial society reinforces the perceived deficits of Black Americans in the eyes of other groups of people of color and whites. This is strongly interconnected to the ideological moving substrates of white supremacy, liberalism, and paternalism. The election of a Black president did not change hundreds of years of animosity and subjugation towards Black Americans and current rhetoric that reinforce anti-Blackness within American society. Additionally, Obama's "politics of respectability" furthered neoliberal agendas and reinforced the perceived deficits of poor Blacks in America.

Regardless of Obama's intent in downplaying race in his presidential discourse, his politics of respectability specifically targeted the Black underclass (Harris, 2014; Smith, 2016). Harris (2014) asserts, "In an era marked by rising inequality and declining economic mobility for most Americans – but particularly for black Americans – the twenty-first century version of the politics of respectability works to accommodate neoliberalism," (p.33). The politics of respectability essentially blame poor Blacks for their own disenfranchisement (Harris, 2014) instead of facing the reality of anti-Blackness that creates circuits of dispossession within American culture. Former Philadelphia Mayor, Michael Nutter, professed it this way: "If you want all of us – black, white, or any other color, - if you want us to respect you, if you want us to look at you in a different way, if you want us not to be afraid to walk down the same side of the street with you, if you want folks not to jump out of

the elevator when you get on….then stop acting like idiots and fools.." (Nutter, as quoted in Harris, 2014, p.35). The politics of respectability are not unique to Barack Obama, but are, according to Harris (2014), subscribed to by Black Americans who have been able to become part of the mainstream elite. Blacks who are able to access circuits of privilege are able to sway society into the idea that America is meritocratic and downplay the barriers that remain for Blacks who are subjected to circuits of dispossession. Obama praised the new Black professional class for their individual self-reliance when he stated, "…you won't hear these men and women use race as a crutch or point to discrimination as an excuse for failure," (Obama, as cited in Smith, 2016, p.72). Obama, like many Black elites, was simply showing how the politics of respectability are taken as common sense by some Black Americans (Harris, 2014) and actively work to reinforce the neoliberal American imaginaries of meritocracy and individualism.

According to Dumas (2013), "…it is neoliberal economic policies and ideological formations that are seen to resolve the problem of racism. The market, in this hegemonic frame, knows neither race or racism, and is therefore regarded as best suited to facilitate racial equality," (p.534). Yet, real structural and systemic barriers exist and continue to marginalize, disenfranchise, and dispossess low-income and Black Americans (Dumas, 2016; Kozol, 2005; Boger & Orfield, 2005; Massey & Denton, 1993; Rosiek & Kinslow, 2016; Sharkey, 2013; Shedd, 2015). "Scholars in education have examined the ways in which educational equity is complicated by discursive practices that also frame the "common sense" of access and opportunity

that is always already presumed to be a function of merit and colorblindness," (Dumas, Dixson, & Mayorga, 2016, p. 6). Neoliberalism thrives on the American imaginaries of individualism and improved (if not entirely post-racial) race relations, and on the educational imaginary of America as a meritocracy. "But blackness and whiteness are not symmetrical; rather, they exist in society with a dependent hierarchy, with whiteness constraining the social power of blackness: by colonizing the definition of what is normal; by institutionalizing a greater allocation of resources for white constituencies; and by maintaining laws that favor whites," (McLaren, 1997, p. 13). Public schools are critical institutions where structural inequities could be addressed. However, the move towards increasingly public-private institutions, which exacerbate racial inequities through circuits of dispossession and deny structural barriers in favor of romanticized American imaginaries, represents a fundamental shift in the struggle for equality and civil rights in America's public schools and in society more generally.

Chapter Two: Theory and Methods as a Package

2.1: Theoretical Alignments

From its inception, this study utilized grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014; Clarke, 2005; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 2008), symbolic interactionism (Clarke, 2005; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Woods, 1996), and post-structuralist (Coloma, 2011; DeLissovoy, 2015; Foucault, 1977; Lather, 2009, St. Pierre, 2002; Todd & Burns, 2007) theories and methods for both its design and for its methods. This study rejects positivist approaches to generating and legitimizing knowledges. There is no grand narrative or one "objective" truth to be "discovered" through my data. Grounded theory seeks to construct theory emerging from the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 2008) and allows the data to lead the analyses towards potentially new, substantive theory generation. Yet, while grounded theory does not inherently look to "prove" formal theories that already exist to explain emerging data, when a formal theory does already exist that helps to explain the data, and the theory is well aligned with the epistemological nature of the study's design (symbolic interactionism and post-structuralism), it makes little sense to generate an entirely new substantive theory. For this reason, during the analysis process, it became compelling to explore the tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) as one possible lens for understanding the macro-level, exo-level, and micro-level experiences, and the meso-level interactivities of the charter school where data collection took place.

As a result, the macro-level analysis for this study maps the various tenets of CRT and conceptualizations of circuitous power and worth onto differentiated citizens (as an historical and ideological investigation) to explain how macro-level, neoliberal "common sense" contexts within education allowed for the political and material conditions of the founding and operation of the charter school in this study. The micro-level analysis of this study will also fold in the tenets of CRT to explore how a critical, methodological bifocality and the reciprocal relationships between the macro-contexts, exo-contexts, and the micro-contexts impacted the school's culture and experiences. Additional theoretical frameworks that apply to the micro-contexts of the school to explain the on-the-ground experiences of the school during the year of data collection will also be discussed later as they are relevant to the data and its analysis. However, for now, it's important and powerful to consider that this study was not conceptualized as a study that would explicitly utilize CRT in its formal macro-level, exo-level, or micro-level analyses. While the possibility remained open to utilizing CRT because the study design was epistemologically rooted in grounded theory, symbolic interactionism, and post-structuralism, CRT was not the sole lens that was adopted during the study's original design. Rather, CRT became a useful lens for interpretation during the analysis process because the emerging data was showing a compelling alignment with its core tenets.

At this point, it may be useful to explain how symbolic interactionism and post-structuralism apply to this study. Similar to Adele Clarke's (2005) conceptualizations of grounded theory as a methodology, this study assumes that

grounded theory methodology is rooted "epistemologically and ontologically in symbolic interactionist theory," (p. 3). A key methodological assumption of symbolic interactionism is that social science inquiry must be grounded in the empirical situation under study. For Woods (1996), this means that empirical world is the "minute-by-minute, day-to-day social life of individuals as they interact together, as they develop understandings and meanings, as they engage in "joint action" and respond to each other as they adapt to situations, and as they encounter and move to resolve problems that arise through their circumstances," (p. 37). It's crucial to learn about how educators at the micro-level of a school conceptualize the influences (from both the macro-level and the exo-level) that constitute and contribute to their school's culture and efficacy. Utilizing grounded theory for the research design, which is epistemologically rooted in symbolic interactionism, provided a closeness of fit for this study (Woods, 1996).

A Critical, Methodological, Bifocality of Design

The critical, methodological bifocality (Weis & Fine, 2012) this study adopted also fits into the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism and post-structuralism. "Social organization provides a framework inside which people construct their actions," (Woods, 1996, p.34). Teachers and students in public schools are part of larger social organizations and systems. "Healthy race relations should target the effects racism has on individual and collective well-being. Attitudes and percentages don't cause racism. Systems do," (Stevenson, 2014, p.51). However, in order to meaningfully reform a system that has consistently been responsible for

the construction of Black and Brown students as inferior to white students and in order to promote healthy race relations, research needs to include a reflexivity that allows for objects of reflections that contextualize the micro-level empirical data within the macro-level contexts that create the conditions of possibilities. In other words, this study fully acknowledges that the data could be interpreted through multiple lenses. However, since the school itself is situated within an exo-level context that is doubly segregated by race and class in the Chicago Public School system, it makes sense to use analytical tools that center race and class, but that do not reduce the analyses to single issues and simple dualities (Agger, 1991).

Critical Race Theory is sometimes criticized by academics for its determinism and outside of the academy, topically, it's been receiving undue attention for creating a simple duality of racial relations. Multiple states (Idaho, Tennessee, North Carolina, Texas, etc.) are currently banning its use in both K-12 education and at the university level for being anti-American "propaganda" because it frames the U.S. as an "inherently racist country" with a "class of oppressors" and "classes of victims," ("Martha MacCallum presses teachers union president on critical race theory in classrooms: 'That's a dodge," 2021). This study understands those critiques, but also finds that Critical Race Theory, as a lens, is efficacious once it is combined with additional theoretical lenses. Researching race is nuanced and complex, and this will be further explained when a discussion specific to its tenets is taken up in a later section of this chapter. The bifocality of methodology, the use of multiple post-structural theories to understand and interpret the data, and the use of symbolic

interactionism all serve to complicate the potential for simple dualities and determinism while showing how Critical Race Theory can help to create meaningful objects of reflection for critical reflexivity at the macro-, exo-, and micro-levels of analyses.

Theories that align with post-structuralism are also utilized throughout this study. Post-structural methodologies can open up possibilities by generating new kinds of knowledge about situated contexts and cultures within the U.S. and within U.S. schools. Post-structural approaches to research "produce multi-dimensional portraits of educators" so that the field can begin to move past the good/bad, successful/failing binaries of the accountability discourse and the "achievement tradition" within U.S. educational research (Sloan, 2006, p.146). Educational research needs to utilize a multiplicity of paradigmatic research methods in order to "work the limits of deconstruction" (Lather, 2009, pp.223-224) and this study attempts to do just that. In order to "dismantle the master's house," (Lorde, 1984) this study rejects positivist notions of knowledge production and the idea that there is one "right way" to rationalize reality and instead embraces pluralist and hybridized perspectives of both theory and methods in order to use conceptual tools in new ways. Additionally, the liberal, humanist idea from the Enlightenment that views history as an always progressive, evolving process is rejected. American history is understood as being nested within "The modern world order, what Paul Keal calls "international society" (1), [which was} is created by European expansionism…non-Europeans were progressively conceptualized in ways that dehumanized them and enabled their

dispossession and subordination," (Mills, 2008, p.1388). While there has certainly been progress towards enfranchisement and increasing eqaulity, it is not a given. The history of educational reforms since 1954's *Brown versus The Board of Education* (yet pre-1983's, A Nation at Risk) can help to illuminate the ways in which a moving substrate of ideological priorities are operationalized to create circuits of worth and differentiated citizens within America's public schools.

Post-structuralism challenges foundational, transcendental Western traditions of thought and knowledge production.

> "Our academic traditions of scholarship build on the assumption that some standard exists against which all arguments (empirical or analytic) can be measured: that a logic exists that rises above political and moral positioning and that can be used to judge the adequacy of an argument. Poststructural/postmodern writing often argues that such assumptions can no longer be accepted: that all reason is imbued with political and moral positioning and that our scholarship must recognize this." (Quantz, 1992, pp.175-176)

Traditional Western assumptions and methods are simply insufficient for a study that proposes research as a political act which embeds sociopolitical critique, knowledge production, and power relations as unavoidable within the research process. Within education,

> "The purposes, structures, and practices of education, both in the past and in the present, are not simply determined externally as the product of social structure but are rather the outcome of mediated social engagements. They are formed, reproduced, and transformed in the struggles that take place between different social interests to define what is common, normal, and acceptable." (Armstrong, as quoted in Coloma, 2011, p.191)

This study aligns with post-structuralist theories and methods that allow for voice to be given to "subaltern ways of knowing that had heretofore been excluded

from legitimate knowledge," (Lather, 2001, p. 203). Instead of approaching research as a process that leads to the colonial idea of speaking for, post-structural conceptual tools seek to speak with research participants as much as possible. Todd and Burns (2007) state it this way,

> "…post-structuralists such as Jacques Derrida (1990) and Michel Foucault (1978, 1979, 1980) are concerned with how what is assumed to be natural, normal, and neutral is imbued with a history of competing discourses that reflect the power inequalities of our society. A central component of the intellectual project of post-structuralism is to consider how relations of power (of which racism, heterosexism, sexism, and classism are central) are sustained through a complex network of seemingly natural interactions, presences, and absences. Through our very language, post-structuralists argue, we produce subjects as marginal or mainstream and sustain these locations relative to each other." (p.26)

Thus post-structuralism offers the ability to both question and interrupt the dominant, macro-level discourses in ways that offer new possibilities for understanding micro-level educators' understandings of their work and the social world that is their school. As Milner (2007) states, "Researchers can acquire evidential truth in research when they value and listen to the self, to others, and to the self in relation to others," (p. 395). Post-structuralist methodologies allow for this study to work through both commonalities and tensions in the macro-level and micro-levels of analyses.

This study serves as an object of reflection and does not conceptualize critical social science investigations as seeking to be the "key" to solving complex, situated realities, but instead should see empirical investigations as an effort that might help improve the situations (Lather, 1999). As such, this study sought to utilize post-structural methods to help to improve situations through engaging a reader's critical reflexivity rather than by subscribing to conceptualizations that believe that

knowledge claims "are merely masks for interests and power," (Howe, 2001, p.202). This study was designed as an object of reflection that utilized particular frameworks and theories to highlight how power operates and then both constructs and reifies the neoliberal narrative of "failing schools" as a crisis to be solved via the market. This study does not claim to interpret the data within the study in one "right" way, rather, the frameworks engaged, and the theories utilized to interpret the data were based off of emerging alignments that deserve to be critically reflected upon when we consider how power contributes to the neoliberal narrative of failing urban schools.

Studying race in schools is complex and multi-tiered; the analyses and findings of the empirical data collected reflects this complexity. "Nowhere is the practice of avoidant coping more prevalent than in public and private schooling," (Stevenson, 2014, p.33). Americans that do not question the ideologies of liberalism and white supremacy (whiteness as normative) and believe America is both meritocratic and post-racial use avoidant coping strategies to deal with questions about race (Stevenson, 2014). Educators, even those working within doubly segregated schools, hold some of these neoliberal ideological and "common sense" assumptions about American society and utilize avoidant coping strategies when trying to understand their micro-level experiences within their school and their professional lives regardless of their biological phenotype. Post-structural methods of research help to excavate the "moving substrates" of ideologies and common sense that are underlying the practices and understandings that educators have regarding their work within schools. "In addition, scholarship on neoliberalism and education

has not fully registered the way that ideology in the present colonizes not only perspectives but also social relationships and subjectivity more generally, such that *what we can come to be* is given in advance by its categories," (DeLissovoy, 2015, p.28). This study utilizes CRT, amongst other theoretical and methodological tools, in order to register the macro-level ideologies that impact educators' efficacy and possibilities within in a doubly segregated charter school in Chicago.

The Tenets of CRT

The tenets of Critical Race Theory, the concept of circuits of worth and differentiated citizenry, Jodi Melamed's (2011) concept of "neoliberal multiculturalism," and Ehrenriech's (2016) concept of "Third Wave Capitalism" form the framework and context for understanding and analyzing the macro-level and exo-level contexts of the neoliberalism episteme and, more specifically, of neoliberal educational reform movements in Chicago and in U.S. schooling. CRT has five prominent tenets (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004) that will be explored more in-depth throughout this study but that require explanation before moving onto the construction of the macro-level, theoretical framework. Those five tenets are: Counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, Whiteness as property, interest convergence, and a critique of liberalism. Data analysis will engage each of these tenets to explore the efficacy of CRT as a framework for understanding current neoliberal educational reforms and the neoliberal episteme in the U.S.

Four tenets of CRT will be utilized, along with various other theoretical tools, to contextualize and understand the macro-level, exo-level, and micro-level analyses

of this study: the critique of liberalism, white interest convergence, whiteness as property, and the permanence of racism. CRT explicitly critiques liberalism. "CRT scholars are critical of three basic notions that have been embraced by liberal legal ideology: the notion of colorblindness, the neutrality of the law, and incremental change," (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p.29). This critique is shared by the theoretical framework of this study that's been outlined in previous sections, but it will continue to be relevant to the analyses throughout this discussion.

White interest convergence and whiteness as property tend to work together to explain how circuits of worth are operationalized to create a differentiated citizenry. Both tenets of CRT align well with the findings of this study and offer a succinct framework from an already compelling theory for contextualizing and understanding how the moving substrate of ideologies persist even as racial progress is sometimes achieved. "In Chery Harris's famous analysis, whiteness itself becomes "property," underwriting a set of baseline entitlements and expectations that are part of one's legitimate rights as a full citizen," (Mills, 2008, p.1394). Whiteness as property functions on three levels: "the right of possession, the right to use, and the right to disposition," DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p.28). In a similar way that property ownership is seen as a right to personhood in capitalism, this study understands that whiteness as property confers rights based on one's ability to access white circuits of worth within neoliberal multiculturalism. This is complex in a post-racial neoliberal episteme, however, because whiteness is understood socially and culturally, and not

merely as a phenotype. Whiteness as property and white interest convergence tend to work in tandem.

> CRT scholars point out, for example, that *Brown versus Board* presumed educational equity could be achieved through one-way integration that brought black students into white schools. This resulted in losses of black schools, black teaching and administrative positions, and black role models for integrated black students; the integration of white students into black schools, with the subsequent losses, was never an option. (Ross, 2010, p.216)

For Black students, schooling typically was/is subtractive/dispossessive (Valenzuela, 1999) and simultaneously, schooling in the U.S. was/is highly additive/privileged for middle-class whites – creating a widening gap in educational equity. Black students are expected to adjust to the realities of white standards and norms while white students were only minimally asked to accommodate and accept Black students into their schools. CRT's tenets of whiteness as property and interest convergence suggest that even minimal racial progress for Black students and communities of color only occurs when it is acceptable and accommodating to white sensibilities (and sometimes not even then). "…civil rights gains were in effect superficial "opportunities" because they were basic tenets of U.S. democracy; however, Bell (1980) argues that these very basic rights came only inasmuch as the converged with the self-interests of Whites," (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 28). Whiteness as property will help to contextualize Melamed's (2011) & Ong's (2005) concept of "circuits of worth," and white interest convergence will help to illuminate how Weis & Fine's (2012) and Fine & Ruglis's (2009) concepts of "circuits of privilege" and "circuits of dispossession" are operationalized within power relations in institutional settings.

One of CRT's most controversial tenets is the permanence of racism. However, utilizing this tenet as a tool for investigating and exploring the experiences of students of color can be useful for engaging critical reflexivity (Teasley & Ikard, 2010). If American society and our public schools are truly in a post-racial reality, then there should be no risk of harm to applying this tenet to empirical research on public institutions and structural barriers. Throughout American history, racial progress has been made. However, even after constitutional amendments and court cases proclaim victories for previously dispossessed and marginalized collectives, more struggle is often necessary for enforcing and protecting those new rights. Individual attitudes and societal conventions are often very resistant to the legislative and judicial changes that expand rights to new collectives. This study, perhaps naïvely, does not entirely argue in favor of this tenet of CRT, but does believe it is an efficacious tool for examining both our historical past (particularly in regards to white supremacy) and our current neoliberal contexts within public schooling. Again, the only way to intentionally change is to be aware of what needs to change. American need to hold itself accountable for racism that has so far been a permanent feature of American institutions. This accountability cannot change the past, but it can help us to formulate more inclusive and equitable policies for moving forward.

First, the macro-level analysis will continue to explore neoliberal multiculturalism and neoliberal educational reforms in the United States. Then, a macro-level, historical analysis of Black educational experiences within the U.S., experiences with segregation, integration, and resegregation before and since *Brown*

versus The Board of Education, and racialized experiences with accountability reforms will be followed by an analysis that will apply tenets of CRT onto the macro-contexts of Black educational experiences in U.S. schooling. Since this study utilizes Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, the analysis will begin with the large ecological system in which both the exo- and micro-levels are nested within. The macro-level is understood as American culture and the neoliberal episteme. The exo-level is the City of Chicago, and more specifically the Chicago Public School system. The micro-level is the school and the community in which the school is located.

Researching race is complex, and to protect the research participants and the school community that so generously allowed for data collection, there will not be further identifying information revealed about the specific school or the research participants beyond their race, sex, and other general identifying information. The school was a charter school in the City of Chicago and is no longer operational. This fact was disappointing and traumatic for the students, teachers, and administrators who were a part of this school's community and culture. Their participation in the research was generous and vulnerable. This study wants to acknowledge the risk and potential for additional injury that could occur if the analysis offered up additional identifying information about either the school or the individual research participants. For that reason, the analysis focuses on the macro- and exo-levels to contextualize the influences that converged for its micro-level founding and operation. The circuits of

worth and, ultimately, dispossession that influenced the school's experiences are the focus of the analysis.

2.2 Micro-level Empirical Methods

This study explores the reciprocal conditionings and power relations among macro-, exo-, and micro-level s of the episteme of neoliberal multiculturalism as it relates to educational public policy reform. The qualitative study design sought to understand how teacher practices within a doubly segregated, urban school context were enacted given the larger macro-cultural influences of neoliberalism and school choice reforms in U.S. public policies more generally. Utilizing a grounded theory methodology that could be responsive to emerging data and ongoing data analysis throughout the data collection process was critical for understanding the multiplicity of voices that would likely emerge with the original case study design to explore how teachers enact race within their classrooms. However, the bifocality of study design that required exploring the macro-level contexts meant that the data emerging was consistently pointing towards a "nexus of structural forces" that dynamically impacted individual teachers with complex and highly individualized impacts. "It is relatively easy to write up institutional stories as thick, local qualitative descriptions without revealing the webs of power that connect institutional and individual lives to larger social formations. Yet, if we do not draw these lines for readers, we render then invisible, colluding the obfuscation of the structural conditions that undergird social inequities," (Weis & Fine, 2004, p. xxi). Utilizing grounded theory, Critical Race Theory, and trauma studies literature to inform data collection and analyses, the data

emerging from the study began to show the outsized influence of racialized power within institutions and structures upon individuals' lives and their on-the-ground realities. As a white researcher, I did not believe that my experiences and perspectives should be imposed to interpret how individual Black teachers experience (and could potentially internalize) a lifetime of interactions with structurally racist institutions. As a white female researcher, I simply could not speak for the racialized experiences of my Black research participants.

I was able to maintain the integrity of the research's study design and utilize the data I had collected in alignment with grounded theory and post-structuralism by shifting my unit of analysis. The voices of my research participants and their experiences during the year of data collection would still be able to be heard, but the case study design required shifting the unit of analysis from the individual teachers to the institution where they taught (since both are consistent with the idea of a micro-level and micro-cultural analysis). I needed to make sure that I could protect my study participants while still showing the dynamic and situated circuits of worth that impacted both the school itself and the teachers who worked within the school. It is for this reason that very little information about the school, the community where it was located, or the teachers who participated in the study will be disclosed.

The school in the study was a charter school in Chicago that originated based on a request for proposals (RFP) during the time of CPS's Renaissance 2010 reforms and the Gates Charter Contract funding programs. This is in full alignment with the macro-level research frameworks and the findings regarding how neoliberal

multiculturalism functions through private-public ventures, and the exo-level analyses of how neoliberal reforms shaped the landscape of possibilities for educational reforms in Chicago. As previously stated, "Healthy race relations should target the effects racism has on individual and collective well-being. Attitudes and percentages don't cause racism. Systems do," (Stevenson, 2014, p.51). Understanding that Black teachers in my study were still actively enduring the effects of institutional and collective racism within their work/school/community settings meant that the analysis needed to find a way to illuminate the systemic circuits of dispossession without speaking for their racialized experiences as Black teachers in Chicago. To do so, the unit of analysis shifted, but the original research questions remained to guide data collection and analysis. The original research question and sub-questions were the following:

What educator practices, particularly around race and ethnicity, are present within doubly segregated school settings given the contexts of neoliberal multiculturalism and accountability as dominant discourses?

4. How do teachers in doubly segregated schools enact race and/or ethnicity within their classroom practices, if they do? Do teachers perceive curriculum, instruction, classroom management, and assessment as culturally connected to their own and their students' ethnic/racial identities? If so, how?
5. How does the school context influence teacher practice(s) around race and ethnicity? Does the school provide professional development for staff that

addresses the race and ethnicity of both staff and students? How do school policies and disciplinary procedures reflect the institutional understandings of the community their serving?

6. How do educators understand the level of educational access and opportunities offered to their students of color within their school and district? How do educators perceive the standardized, assessed outcomes of their students when compared to the inputs and opportunities in their school and district?

The research question and sub-questions proved resilient against the ethical considerations and adjustments that arose during data collection and analyses. The school context and understanding the resulting relationships (between administrators and teachers and their school contexts) within a doubly segregated school context allowed for a structural, empirical analysis that could better show the circuits of worth and the material impacts of decades (1995 – present) of neoliberal reforms that constituted the institutional structures within Chicago Public Schools. The charter school in the study served as an object of reflection for better understanding how the ideological moving substrate functions to nourish power relations and pre-existing circuits of worth even while enacting "innovative" school choice reforms in neoliberal multicultural contexts.

Empirical Methods and Analytic Guiding Questions

The qualitative data collection and analysis processes were guided not only by the research questions, but also by analytical questions meant to contextualize

neoliberalism throughout the data collection and analysis. This primary analytical question and sub-questions were as follows:

What does it look like for schools/classrooms to be highly racially segregated yet simultaneously implementing "race neutral" standards and accountability policies? What role do educators play in this?

1. In what ways does the neutrality of race within neoliberal multicultural school reforms play out in racialized educational settings (i.e. “apartheid” and resegregating U.S. schools) that are also low-income?
2. Do educators resist, adopt, internalize, or ignore notions associated with the neutrality of race within neoliberal school reforms as they conduct their work in doubly segregated school contexts? How? Why?
3. What kinds (discursive, causal, rhizomatic) of relationships exist between a) the larger neoliberal school reform discourse (including accountability), b) the schools' particular ways of enacting or responding to neoliberal school reforms?

The questions guided the bifocality study design. Especially after finding a need to change the unit of analysis from individuals to the structure and social world of the school, the analytical questions helped to focus the analysis on race neutrality at the school-wide level.

Site Selection

I conducted the study in a doubly segregated charter school in the city of Chicago in order to examine how neoliberal educational reforms were understood

from the inside. Chicago is a city that was actively engaged in urban austerity and therefore can be regarded as an incubator for national policies aligned with neoliberal school choice reform movements (Lipman, 2014). The school was a charter school that was manifested as part of the Renaissance 2010 and New Schools for Chicago programs. The school began with funding from the Gates Foundation and was a recipient of philanthrocapitalist funding specifically meant to expand school choice models in an urban school district as an attempt to "correct" the crisis narrative of "failing" schools. The charter school was a stand-alone charter, meaning that it was not associated with a larger charter network and was operating on its own, fully responsible for their school policies and hiring while maintaining compliance with some CPS policies. The demographics of the school were 98% African American and 95% low-income. Additionally, since it was located in the city of Chicago, it would provide a lens into the sustainability of private-public ventures in school reforms. The situated context of the school, the fact that it depended upon private-public venture philanthropy for its initial start-up, and the willingness of the school leaders to allow full access for a yearlong data collection process converged to provide fertile ground for the study.

Researcher Commitments and School and Research Participant Confidentiality

Efforts have been made to protect research participants as well as to safeguard the identity of the charter school in this study. Neoliberal educational reforms are often controversial and contentious. The school leaders and educators who consented and participated in the study were generous and vulnerable throughout the school

year. The ideological paradigms that converge in charter schools and within charter school educators are complex. It is also important to note that most school leaders and teachers who participated in this study have grown up in neoliberal contexts for their entire lives. Those born after 1975 were children during the neoliberal turn when Reagan first published ANAR and began their teaching careers within the context of NLBC or RTTT. The ideological alignments are also knowingly kept under the surface within neoliberal multiculturalism. The markets are touted as race neutral and many people who grew up in the city of Chicago truly want educational reforms that provide solutions for communities and families – now, not ten years from now. School choice reforms and charter schools can be attractive options for not just students and families, but for teachers and administrators too. Additionally, if your entire teaching career has included private-public venture options, then neoliberal reforms have likely become normalized in your experiences. When Obama's education reform policies are also aligned with neoliberal reforms and he was understood to be a "community organizer" from the Southside, it can be opaque to recognize the circuits of dispossession that are contained within private-public educational ventures.

President Obama often embraced markets and business practices, but seized on the economic crisis, particularly the fiscal crisis of cities and states to escalate marketization, embedding neoliberal logics into federal education funding requirements, competitive grants, and new initiatives (Ravitch, 2020). Three interrelated themes comprised Obama's education program: more markets,

privatization, and top-down accountability; competitive allocation of resources; and the pervasive influence of an interlocking network of corporate consulting groups, neoliberal think tanks, billionaire venture philanthropies (particularly the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Eli Broad Foundation), and the private organizations and projects they sponsor. Education historian Diane Ravitch tartly dubbed the Obama administration, "Bush's third term in education," (Ravitch as quoted in Lipman, 2016, pp. 133 – 134).

Ideally, educators would have a full awareness of the ideological commitments that are aligned with their workplace/school; however, this is not always the case. Not all teachers who work in charter schools are neoliberal reformers. Many educators who work in charter schools view their schools as public schools because they draw from the same population of students, and all kids need good schools. Additionally, not all school leaders and educators in charter schools understand the complex paradigmatic and ideological moving substrate that underlie neoliberal reform models and understand how power operates within circuits of worth.

Researching race in schooling and "race neutral" school reforms is highly sensitive work. Many charter school leaders would likely not consent to a study that utilizes CRT, critical theories, and post-structuralism as theoretical frameworks because it would open them up to criticisms and a critique of their model from an outsider. Empathy and understanding were key commitments for conducting this study. It is a structural analysis that sees the issues as structural issues to be reflected

upon. Often, how one looks at a problem provides a framework for potential solutions and this study does not locate the problem within individuals. Critiques of the level of ideological awareness of research participants were a trend amongst educators in the study's findings and the case could certainly be made that research participants were operating within a paradigm of chosen (ignor)ance as members of the "professional and managerial new middle class." However, those critiques are unproductive toward changing the structures. It is for this reason that shared contradictions and tensions will be highlighted across research participant/educator understandings, but individuals are not the unit of analysis. The unit of analysis is the school itself and the multiplicities of contradictions and tensions that arise between the inter-relationships of structures and individuals is what will be explored, The intention is towards activating empathy for the educators and towards a creativity for increasing ideological awareness within edcuators for regarding the structural conditions in schooling which they endure alongside their students.

Ethnographic Methods and Data Collection

Data collection centered on ethnographic methods to explore the school context and educators' relationship to their school's culture and to macro-level and exo-level, neoliberal school reforms. Ethnographic field notes were collected at school-wide meetings and events, as well as during classroom observations of teachers and educators. Data collection started with the first formal day of teacher professional development in early August of the school year. Two full weeks of daily meetings and teacher planning sessions were attended alongside school staff and

faculty. When invitations were extended for events outside of the school day (both social and professional), they were accepted and included in ethnographic field notes and memos with the consent of school staff and faculty. School leaders were transparent about my presence as a researcher and highly encouraged teachers and staff to engage and participate in the study because I would be spending the full school year with them. Once classes began and students were in attendance, I spent the first full week on campus while I considered sampling strategies and chose specific research participants for classroom and school wide meeting observations. I did not spend every day of the school year on campus; however, I was present for up to two weeks of each month (Oct, Dec, Jan, and April were months where I was only present for one week of each month for field notes and observations).

Table 2.1*: Data Collection: August - June*

Data Collection: August – June (10 months)						
Tasks	Pre-BOY	Fall	Winter	Spring	EOY	Totals
Professional Development Observations	80 hours	9 hours	17 hours	5 hours	N/A	111 hours
School Leader Interviews	3 leaders, one-hour long interviews	N/A	N/A	N/A	2 leaders, one-hour long interviews	5 hours
Teacher Interviews	7 teachers, one-hour long interviews	N/A	7 teachers, one-hour long interviews	N/A	7 teachers, one-hour long interviews	21 hours
Classroom Observations	N/A	2 per teacher, per month (14 hours)	2 per teacher per month (14 hours)	2 per teacher, per month (14 hours)	N/A	42 hours
Special Event Observations		Fundraising Gala (3 hours)	Cultural School Event (3 hours)	N/A	Field Trip Attendance (4 hours)	10 hours

For this reason, it was a quasi-ethnographical study design where I was present, but not entirely embedded full-time at the school. Between school-wide meetings,

teacher observations, and school events I spent time in the teacher's lounge engaging with staff and faculty. Field notes were agreed to and collected from those informal conversations as an additional part of the school day and as evidence for school culture observations. Field notes from teacher observations in the classroom and during school-wide professional development meetings were notes taken in real-time and recorded in research notebooks. After those sessions, researcher memos were also recorded to synthesize the observation or meeting. Informal conversations from research participants throughout the school day in settings other than formal ones were included in memos written after leaving the teacher's lounge or after departing the school building. During professional development, I had permission from the school leaders to collect any hard copies of handouts or materials that were utilized during the meeting. I did not receive permission to audio tape and transcribe staff meetings, but field notes in a notebook were acceptable and gathered. During field observations, I was quite passive and did not participate unless asked to do so by school leaders or teachers.

One-on-one, open-ended interviews were conducted with the nine initial teacher participants and three school leaders. As the composition of the staff changed throughout the school year, follow up interviews for a total of three, hour-long interviews with each of seven teachers and two, hour-long interviews with one school leader were collected. The first interview round was conducted during September and October. The second round of interviews with only teachers was conducted during January and February. The third round of teacher interviews and the final

school leader interview were conducted in late May and early June. Classroom and school-wide observations were conducted throughout the school year and observations of teacher professional development sessions were attended according to the school's calendar for teacher institute days. Given that the two new school leaders were unavailable for a second interview (one left the school in October and the other took a medical leave after a critical incident which resulted in the arrest of a student), a former school leader who had worked with the school's founder volunteered to participate in a retrospective interview utilizing the same leadership interview protocol. Interviews were audio recorded with permission from educators and were transcribed for coding and analysis.

The semi-structured interviews served the purposes of exploring and understanding educators' personal and professional contexts and trajectories; classroom (for teachers only) and school contexts; and macro-level contextual understandings around ideologies and accountability in school reforms. The beginning of the year interview protocols focused on educator micro-cultures. "Micro-cultures" is a key concept meant to capture the numerous components of positioning, practices, choices, and perspectives that make up the unique identities of each individual," (Mahiri, 2016, p.6). Micro-cultures are understood as mediated by language and "dynamic and constantly changing," (Mahiri, 2016, p.7). For this reason, Mahiri's (2016) notion of micro-cultures and Hill Collins & Bilge's (2016) concepts of intersectionality were utilized together to best capture the intersectional identities *and* micro-cultural practices, choices, and perspectives of participants. The

middle-of-the-year interviews that only took place with teachers served as both a check-in to understand how they felt about their year and to continue with the previous interview protocol that moved from their personal micro-cultural understandings to their professional contexts at their current school and within CPS. The end-of-the-year interviews served to give participants an opportunity to articulate their ideological and macro-level understandings of American society. The professional development observations served the purposes of helping to better understand the school on its own terms. By attending the two-week, intensive professional development sessions with both new and returning staff prior to the school year, I was able to learn about their vision, mission, and culture as they intend for new members of their staff and faculty to absorb and understand it. Whenever the conversation turned to issues of concern with personnel or about individual student cases with discipline or special education requirements, I made sure to stop taking notes.

Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed and uploaded to Nvivo coding software. In addition to a priori codes, based on my research questions, situational mappings of both administrators and teachers were developed for use in idenfitying emerging, inductive codes. As part of the nested, ecological data analysis process, I "mapped" cases of each research participant to create a nested personal, situational map (micro-culture and professional trajectory) and a social worlds map (exo- and macro-cultures). The mapping techniques are outlined by Adele Clarke (2005) in *Situational*

Analysis; Grounded Theory After the Postmodern Turn. Clarke utilizes both Foucault and Strauss to conceptualize symbolic interactionist grounded theory infused with post-structuralism. "The concepts of *both* Strauss and Foucault are social, institution*al*, and organization*al* – though not necessarily and certainly not only about institutions and organizations," (Clarke, 2005, p.53). Clarke's mapping techniques and the analysis of ethnographic field notes, interview data, and institutional documents served to rupture my data analysis process as I began to understand that my analysis needed to shift from individual case studies to a structural case study of the school and its culture. The a priori and inductive codes generated by both Black and white research participants began to highlight issues of personal and collective traumas and racialized limiting beliefs as Nvivo coding proceeded. The micro-cultural questions and analysis of educators' racialized, lived experiences began to complicate and create tensions with the study design. It is for this reason that mappings of the research participants cannot be shared, but the rupture in the data analysis process did lead to a realignment for a bifocality of study design that could focus on the relationships between individual and structural conditions within neoliberal multiculturalism.

At this point, data analysis focused on the school as the micro-cultural unit of analysis and the process of looking for reciprocal relationships between macro-level, historical effects of racism in schooling and micro-level phenomena that played out at the school due to its neoliberal alignments started to take shape as co-creative manifestations of circuits of worth and differentiated schooling/citizenry. It is for this

reason that the case study of the school and educators' experiences for the year of data collection provide critical insights that will be presented with theoretical frameworks to contextualize the reciprocal relationships between macro-level and micro-level power relations. The case study itself is an object of reflection presented for the reader to consider. As a post-structural piece of scholarship, I have no qualms about disclosing my ideological positionings that formed the macro-level and exo-level analyses that are discussed in Chapter Three of this study. I do not intend to be neutral or non-political. That said, extreme caution and empathy for each individual's racialized, lived experiences (both Black and white) are when discussing the micro-cultural manifestations of neoliberal circuits of worth and the resulting empirical, philosophical, and pedagogical findings and implications . At this point, the study asks the reader to engage their analytical consciousness while reading this story of dispossession as an object of reflection on the "efficacy" of neoliberal school choice reforms.

Chapter Three: Creating the Field of Possibilities; Macro-, Exo-, and Meso-level Contexts Explored

In this chapter, I begin by describing the macro-level contexts that constitute the contemporary reform culture within K-12 public schooling at the national level. Given the nested, ecological study design it's imperative to set the context for the empirical analysis of the micro-level manifestations that follow in later chapters. The thick-description in this chapter offers an understanding of how macro-level culture and politics contribute to the field of possibilities for contemporary educational reformers. This context setting is particularly important for understanding a later analysis of the neoliberal aligning educators that founded the school and the resulting micro-cultural climate where data was collected for this study. Following the macro-level context, a discussion of the exo-level conditions of the City of Chicago and the corporate turn within the Chicago Public School system (which resulted in the adoption of neoliberal reform policies, and ultimately created the field of possibilities for the school in this study) follows.

3.1: Neoliberal Narratives of "Failing" Public Schools

The current dominant discourses in U. S. educational reform often ignore the social contexts and complexities of everyday interactions and practices within schools in favor of reforms that political leaders and lawmakers hope will provide a "silver bullet" to improving educational outcomes. The "achievement tradition" (Apple & Weis, 2013) within educational research often provides a perceived "silver bullet" solution as evidence of research-based practices that should work for all students

regardless of socio-cultural contexts. The achievement tradition of educational research is primarily focused on how to get students to learn without regard for the larger contexts in which schools exist. Apple and Weis (2013) argue that the,

> …dominant research model – what has been called the "achievement tradition" – has been weakened by its neglect of two things. First, because of its positivist emphasis and its overreliance on statistical approaches, it has been unable to unravel the complexities of everyday interaction in schools. Its focus on product has led to a thoroughgoing naiveté about the very process of education, about the internal dynamics of the institution. Second, its tendency toward a-theoreticism has made it difficult for us to link these internal dynamics to that larger ideological, economic, and political context. In this research model, schools sit isolated from the structurally unequal (and conflict-ridden) society of which they are – in real life – fully a part. (p.69)

When perceived "silver-bullet," one-size-fits-all solutions don't function as expected to within situated, localized contexts of schooling, educators and students are perceived as "failing" and, in turn, contribute to the dominant neoliberal narrative of the inherent failure of public schools, and in particular, the failure of low-income students of color within urban, public schools (schools increasingly subject to resegregating and doubly segregated school populations). When the failure is located in individuals and local school communities (as opposed to structures and systems), circuits of dispossession are activated (Lipman, 2011).

Neoliberal multiculturalism and the achievement tradition of research are both rooted in a similar approach to generating and legitimizing knowledge. The epistemological belief imbedded in dominant neoliberal ideologies and narratives is one that claims an "objective" truth can be discovered (Jinks, 1997).

> Jane Flax (1990) describes of the themes, the foundations, of humanism as follows: that there is a "stable, coherent self;" that "language is in some sense transparent;" that "reason and its 'science' – philosophy – can provide an

> objective, reliable, and universal foundation of knowledge;" that knowledge acquired from the right use of reason will be true… (as quoted in St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000, p.5)

These embedded beliefs within neoliberal multiculturalism and the achievement tradition of educational research have strong implications for social science and educational research. Expert knowledge that adheres to the rationality of science is/was believed to be a path to emancipation and a more progressive world (Popkewitz, 1991). The idea of progress legitimized social science and situated knowledge as outside of relations of power (St. Pierre, 2002).

Foundational claims about truth and neutrality have led to conflicts, however. Educational research was, and often still is, based on foundational, humanistic beliefs that began with psychometric testing. IQ and achievement tests were among the first inquiries of educational research (Shepard, 2016). At the beginning of the 20th century, when educational research was being established as its own discipline, the field of education was going through a scientific management movement, and "to better address the needs of the urban poor, corrupt systems would be replaced with a centralized, corporate model of school organization…," (Shepard, 2016, p. 113).

This move towards scientific efficiency occurred at a time when the American eugenics movement was bolstered by claims of scientific objectivity among nativists who reified their racist beliefs of white superiority, and Black and Brown inferiority, through IQ testing (Shepard, 2016). The "neutrality of data" has been justifying the creation of circuits of dispossession throughout the history of educational research by locating "failure" within individuals and not within the systems that serve them.

Issues of race and equity are overwhelmingly ignored within contemporary neoliberal multiculturalist discourses, potentially setting up a public school system that will continue to increase segregation and to disproportionately oppress low-income students and/or students of color, a historical trend that continues to (re)create circuits of dispossession for Black and Brown bodies within America's institution of public schooling (while simultaneously reinforcing circuits of privilege for whiteness and those who conform to dominant, white norms).

One of the ways in which the "neoliberal neutrality of data" is operationalized within public schools is through the daily practices that reproduce its ideology as the only—or the 'sensible'—way. "The idea that no alternative to neoliberal capitalism is possible is known officially as the doctrine (first associated with Margaret Thatcher) that there is no alternative (TINA)," (De Lissovoy, 2015, p. 29). De Lissovoy (2015) wrote:

> Rather than merely believing that things must be the way they are, we live this reality in our modes of life and social practices, and through the subjectivities to which they correspond, in a way that embed ideology, we might say, within "reality" itself…For instance, it is not so much that we believe that learning is compatible with a fracturing of the understanding into a million testable objectives but rather that, in continuing to organize curriculum units on the basis of standards that these objectives comprise and continuing in practice to equate student progress with an ability to reproduce this fragmentation of knowledge in testing situations, we live and are guided by the ideology of the score, (p. 32).

The ideology of the score, in the case of neoliberal accountability practices in U.S. schooling, is represented as the expected outcomes of student achievement without regard to what might have constituted the opportunities offered to students in the first place. Standardized testing of fragmented objectives is seen as the reliable and fair

way, the "silver bullet solution," to judge student achievement and outcomes and this is lived on a daily basis throughout schools and classrooms in America. When the outcomes in student achievement reproduce the inequities of our system, neoliberal capitalism naturally looks to correct the disparity through creating a more "efficient" educational marketplace which reinforces America's dominant crisis narrative of "failing schools" and reifies already existing circuits of worth and differentiated citizenry.

The Shift to Quasi-Public Schooling

Within our current neoliberal episteme, the lines between public and private sectors within education are blurred and without solid distinctions (Hess, 2004). Koyama (2013) focuses her research "on the public-private relationships in the United States…including test development and preparation, data analysis, and targeted remedial instruction," to demonstrate how private service providers within public education are becoming the norm (p.80). Additionally, educational reforms rooted in accountability, standards, and choice have been nearly the same from both Republicans and Democrats since the 1980s (Thomas, 2012) and neoliberal multiculturalism helps to explain the corporate and market-based assumptions imposed by policy makers on both sides of the aisle through governmental legislation. Additionally, the circuits of dispossession that disadvantage students of color and low-income students become far easier to activate and more opaque to examine as privatized testing companies and their mathematical algorithms are making use of "neutral" data to sort and categorize both students and teachers. Since the outcomes

of the data cannot always be explained (because their algorithms and mathematical formulas are often proprietary and therefore protected intellectual property), educators have little to no recourse to challenge testing results of their students and/or their own professional evaluations (O'Neil, 2017). Private companies hired by public schools, as part of accountability measures, do not always have to explain the formulas behind their algorithms and data analysis processes. In effect, private companies are using tax-payer dollars to shift public institutions with little accountability for how they determine their conclusions.

This blurring of lines and lack of distinction between public and private institutions is evidence of the progression to neoliberal multiculturalism (and capitalist progressions) within American society. Contemporary conservatives prefer economic deregulation, low rates of taxation, and privatized government services while looking to the power of the state to enforce respectable and disciplining standards of behavior on individuals. Rhodes (2011) states that,

> In contemporary conservatism, the state works actively to promote *both* a market-oriented economic order in which individuals compete for opportunities and take responsibility for their own self-care, *and* a conservative political and moral environment emphasizing personal responsibility, self-regulation, and acquiescence to authority. Many agree that these policies and norms have contributed significantly to economic inequality and to the growing marginalization of disadvantaged people, especially those of color. (p.522)

Within educational reform movements, the standards and accountability discourses align with this conservative agenda and disadvantages students of color who are experiencing increasing forms of marginalization as circuits of dispossession wield institutional power. A fundamental part of the justification for many neoliberal

educational reforms are the focus on racial disparities, yet researchers have found that instead of alleviating inequities, the policies have worked to exacerbate inequities (Wun, 2014). Conservatives are not alone in this educational public policy endeavor, however. Many Democrats, too, (regardless of being perceived of as being more socially liberal) share this way of thinking when it comes to educational public policies essentially creating a neoliberal monoculture within the possibilities for educational reforms. In many cases, a market-based economic order that emphasizes personal responsibility allies with post-racial rhetoric to shift blame from systems to individuals regardless of one's political party – this foundational meritocratic thinking is taken as common sense for many Americans. "Individualism and meritocratic values provide dominant group members with an ostensibly principled means to deny the validity of group-based redistributive policies and transform them into weaker policies aimed at equal treatment and opportunity enhancement," (Wodtke, 2016, p.25), in effect, creating paradoxical circuits of dispossession. Fusarelli & Young (2011) claim that education is now a quasi-public good in America,

> That is, we are beginning to see not only a change in our understanding of education as *a public good*, but also as education *for the public good*. This uncertainty has led to a paradigm shift in how we think about public education. Discourse is moving away from public education – *by the people and for the people* toward an emphasis on public education – *for the people*. (p. 90)

They continue by stating that,

> This redefinition assumes that public education is no longer solely the province of the public school system – there is privatization of a quasi-public good. Other venues or providers (e.g., parochial, private, home schooling, charter, privately managed, etc.) are viewed as capable of offering a quality education that can produce public benefits…Public education for the public

> good is recast as public, public-private, and private education for the public good. (p. 91)

The Conservative Modernization and Accountability Reforms

Similar to the shift during the 19th century from an agrarian society to an urban society, contemporary Americans have been contending with an economic and cultural shift towards globalization and a global economy. "Recent theoretical and empirical work focusing on the role of cities in the global economy provides a deeper understanding of the economic and cultural processes that are generating new inequalities and new challenges for urban education," (Lipman, 2004, p. 13). No Child Left Behind (2002) and the current accountability movement that has resulted from those federal policies were born out of the national alarm that occurred after the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* (ANAR). "A challenge to American commercial and industrial preeminence in world competition is combined with dire warnings of the decline of individual intellectual, moral and spiritual strength essential 'to competently participate in a free, democratic society,'" (Popkewitz, 1991, p. 148). Although the recommendations from ANAR were significantly different from the policies instituted by No Child Left Behind (NCLB), ANAR was a move towards establishing standards and NCLB became the strategy to hold America's public schools accountable for testing that those standards were being met, (Ravitch, 2010). Increased surveillance and oversight over the work of an "unsophisticated," (and gendered) profession that was contributing to the rising mediocrity of America's youth and their education. ANAR and NCLB suggestions and policies began the move towards Apple's (2001) idea of a "conservative modernization."

Michael Apple (2001) calls our current paradigm and neoliberal imaginaries present in educational reforms, and society at large, a "conservative modernization," (p.5). Neoliberal and market-based imaginaries that lead to increased privatization are perceived by many to be the "solution" to reforming schools in the United States. Similar to the dominant market-based society in the 19th century, some contemporary reformers are looking to the market to "fix" public education. Apple (2001) states,

> …we are told to "free" our schools by placing them into the competitive market, restore "our" traditional common culture and stress discipline and character, return God to our classrooms as a guide to all our conduct inside and outside the school, and tighten control through more rigorous and tough-minded standards and tests. (p.5)

Conservative reformers with this line of thinking seek to privatize schooling and make it a competitive marketplace, while progressive reformers seek to maintain and strengthen a public system of free education. The tension between schooling as a public good or a private good (Labaree, 1997) is front and center in our current educational reform debates. The conservative modernization wants to ride all of these forces further and seeks to shift public schools into an increasingly privatized educational marketplace with students and parents as educational consumers through the accountability and school choice movements in educational reforms.

The conservative modernization as it was embodied in NCLB and the larger accountability movement are theorized to contribute to the everyday social practices and policies that structure school reforms favored by a hegemonic coalition on the right composed of neoliberals, neoconservatives, authoritarian populists, and the new middle class, (Apple 2001; Apple 2013; Goodman, 2006; Lipman, 2004; Pedroni,

2007). Inherent to in recommendations (although they are different from one another) of both ANAR and NCLB is the ideological moving substrate that seeks to quantify, compare, and create standardized schooling experiences that privilege dominant, white norms and is characteristic of forms of uncritical, dysconscious racism.

Neoliberalism and Differentiated Schooling

The reliance on market-based reforms to improve schools and schooling in the United States is meant to privilege some (accumulation) and stigmatize others (dispossession). Furthermore, the conservative modernization continues to idealize "neutral" curriculums and standardization that is not relevant to the lived experiences of large groups of students. Many of our current political and ideological realities in the United States come from teaching a whitewashed and male supremacist curriculum in schools. Not only are underrepresented groups not present or represented in the nation's history or literature, the oppression and wrongs of America are sometimes ignored or entirely misconstrued. Additionally, due to accountability, in many school settings where skills-based learning is emphasized, teachers and administrators are under intense scrutiny to raise tests scores and often let the testing lead the curriculum (Lipman, 2004; Ravitch, 2010). In doing so, this recreates and reproduces a system of differentiated schooling that is reflected in a differentiated citizenry that experiences opportunities and schooling in vastly different ways.

The resulting reproduction of differentiated schooling is part of the ideologically aligned educational reforms of neoliberalism and its goals of privatization and the creation of an educational marketplace. Market-based, neoliberal reforms that seek to make a privatized educational marketplace out of schooling in the United States would inherently not reform all schools due to the necessity of competition in a capitalist economy and society. Schooling in the United States is not only shaped by society, schooling also continues to shape our society.

Contemporary Reforms and Expanding Markets

Neoliberal education reforms that move towards increasing standardization, testing, and accountability which create differentiated circuits of worth constitute America's contemporary reform climate. Apple (2001) explains,

> "In this [dominant] discourse, the fundamental role of schooling is to fill students with knowledge that is necessary to compete in today's rapidly changing world. To this is often added an additional caveat: Do it as cost-effectively and as efficiently as possible. The ultimate arbiter of whether we have been successful at this is students' mean gain on achievement tests. A neutral curriculum is linked to a neutral system of accountability, which in turn is linked to a system of school finance. Supposedly, when it works well, these linkages guarantee rewards for merit." (p. 6)

The market, seen as neutral and meritocratic, is therefore the best orientation for reforming "failing" U.S. schools (a manufactured crisis via ANAR) and providing for a socially efficient educational marketplace that provides "race neutral" educational opportunities. The emphasis of the market to maximize profits as an indication of success requires that schools accomplish this in a manner that is both cost-effective and socially efficient in the eyes of tax payers.

Yet, those who prefer privatization and competition in the form of an educational marketplace have taken over the common sense, dominant discourse in educational reform movements. According to Kirp (2013),

> Charter schools, the kinder and gentler face of privatization, have proliferated in recent years. More than two million students attend charters, prompting Wall Street Journal editorial-writers to hail 2011, when thirteen states passed legislation liberalizing voucher and charter regulation, as 'the year of school choice.' (p. 213)

Despite data that shows no significant differences in achievement between regular public schools and charter schools, proponents of school choice believe that vouchers and charters are the only way to save education in the U.S. (Apple, 2010; Pedroni, 2007; Ravitch, 2010). The very foundation of American public schooling is being shook by the school choice movement and often in the name of equity. When considering the charter movement of post-Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Buras (2011) argued that,

> Educational reforms in New Orleans are not designed to respond to oppressed communities or to enhance public school performance, even if they are often couched in such language. Rather, this is a feeding frenzy, a revivified Reconstruction-era blueprint for how to capitalize on public education and line the pockets of white entrepreneurs (and their black allies) who care less about working-class schoolchildren and their grandmothers and much more about obtaining public and private monies and an array of lucrative contracts. (p. 303)

The ideological divide among school choice advocates and public school advocates is widening; as circuits of privilege and dispossession are activated in children's lives, issues of race, poverty, and language are central to each side's arguments.

The neoliberalism taking hold of American society adheres to the private

marketplace as inherently superior to government-run, public institutions. This is felt acutely within the educational reform movement. It's as if the ideology of manifest destiny has transferred from accumulating physical land to accumulating market shares, which are dependent upon a system of ever-expanding marketplaces. However, since market theory believes in its superiority (and is symptomatic of white supremacy), those who advocate for school choice reforms rarely look closely to see how school choice has worked in the past or is currently operating (Orfield, 2013). "To simply accept dogma inconsistent with evidence is to needlessly risk the possibility of increasing inequity for the student who most need opportunity," (Orfield, 2013, p.259). Additionally, since many white Americans believe the U.S. to be post-racial, the ideologies of individualism and meritocracy reinforce deficit views of low-income students and families of color. Orfield (2013) concludes,

> Unfortunately, true educational reform cannot be accomplished by repeating a mantra and pretending a market exists. That approach merely treats predictable and serious inequality as if it were the result of free choice in a fair, equitable setting, shifting the blame from society to those who choose among limited, confusing choices and diverting attention from both the real quality of choices and the processes for choosing. (p.259)

The most vulnerable student populations in U.S. schooling are increasingly seen as commodities for the expansion of neoliberal policies and markets that are firmly rooted in the moving substrate of ideologies that feed power relations in schooling.

Audit Culture and Students of Color

Accountability reforms, standardization, and the ideology of the score (in the form of test scores and "teacher-proof" curriculums) embed schools with a need carry

out surveillance and insist upon teacher compliance with technical control of their work. According to Davies and Bansel (2010), neoliberal practices install "a collective commitment to "quality" through which progress, efficiency, best practice, science, expertise, professionalism, coordination with the Common Good will be accomplished, and none of which will be taken to be real unless they can be measured," (p.11). This essentially creates an audit culture of surveillance through "neutral" data for schools and those who work and learn within them.

Good teaching becomes reliant on delivering a homogenized and standardized "teacher proof" curriculum, in order to produce better student test scores, instead of having teachers engage in their own processes of knowledge production through curriculum creation for the specific needs of their localized students. The perceived need for accountability combines with teachers' needs to raise test scores to transform technical control and administrative surveillance of data into teachers' self-surveillance and reliance on technical controls.

> The strategic import of the logic of technical control in schools lies in its ability to integrate into one discourse what are often seen as competing ideological movements, and, hence, to generate consent from each of them. The need for accountability and control by administrative managers, the real needs of teachers for something that is "practical" to use with their students, the interest of the state in efficient production and cost savings, the concerns of parents for "quality education" that "works" (a concern that will be coded differently by different classes and class segments), industrial capital's own requirements for efficient production and so on, can be joined. (Apple, 2013, p.103)

High-stakes testing and accountability reforms are essentially, "audit technologies," (Davies & Bansel, 2010). According to Foucault (1977), discipline "…may be identified neither with an institution not with an apparatus; it is a type of power, a

modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a "physics" or an "anatomy" of power, a technology," (As cited in Rabinow, 2010, p. 206). The narrative of "failing schools" is shared with a narrative of "bad teachers," subjecting them to technologies which are intended to be self-disciplining and that result in the self-surveillance of their work.

Teachers who want to experience a sense of success with their students (Birkeland, 2004) are, at least partially, reliant on the measurements of high-stakes testing to organize their work. Apple (2001) argues,

> …policies that were put into place to raise standards, to increase test scores, to guarantee public accountability, and to make schools more competitive had results that were more than a little damaging to those students who were already the least advantaged in these same schools. Yet it was not only the students who witnessed these negative effects. The voices of teachers and administrators indicate what happens to them as well. They too begin to harden their sense of which students are "able" and which students are not. (p. 92).

Organizing teachers' work to produce high testing outcomes can actually work to lower standards and expectations of students (another way the dispossession of students can occur). Accountability and the consequences of being labeled as a "failing" teacher or school, supports the discourses about school effectiveness and reinforces the need for more accountability (Ball as cited in Epstein, 1993). Therefore, "technologies of audit are mobilised to generate a level of vulnerability that will guarantee the right performances, without resistance," (Davies & Bansel, 2010, p.11). The audit culture created by the accountability movement and its techniques and procedures act as a panoptic, disciplinary power to create "docile

bodies" willing to work within standardized social norms (Foucault, 1977; Thomas, 2008). Teachers are expected to dispossess their professional expertise and adhere to accountability practices and "teacher proof" curriculums.

The neoliberal standards, accountability, and school choice movements are exacerbating inequities in American schooling. "The use of standardized tests can be considered a form of institutionalized racism because they lend credibility to policies that have denied, and are continuing to deny, persons of color equal access to educational and job opportunities," (Williams & Land, 2006, p. 584). Additionally, the accountability movement is known to provide a socially efficient rationalization for school choice and the increasing privatization of both schools and the services provided to schools through an educational marketplace. The creation of an educational marketplace is viewed as a common sense reform because it is purported to provide competition that will increase outcomes in schooling while saving taxpayers money and providing freedom of choice within schooling for American families (Pedroni, 2007).

The concept of neoliberal multiculturalism, where economic policies, ideologies, and the market are believed to resolve racial problems within society, contribute to the continued marginalization of Black students and students of color (Dumas, 2013). Since the market is race neutral, it's rationalized that neoliberal educational reforms must be, as well. "Neoliberal multiculturalism is able to account for continued racial disparities by insisting that racialized subjects who still suffer are either unable to access race-transcending neoliberal opportunities, or more damning,

are unwilling to surrender racial allegiances in favor of neoliberal ones," (Dumas, 2013, p.531). Accountability, school choice, and neoliberal reforms need to be critically examined, however, when the history of schooling in the U.S. has consistently denied equitable opportunities and funding to schools that serve low-income students of color therby creating circuits of dispossession.

According to Foucault (1977), in regards to the formation of a disciplinary society, "Generally speaking, it might be said that the disciplines are techniques for assuring the ordering of human multiplicities," (As cited in Rabinow, 2010, p.207). One of the disciplinary institutions where the ordering of human multiplicities can take place is the school. "The burden of harsh school discipline, which is borne disproportionately by African American male students, is a boon to industries designed to capitalize on youth educational and disciplinary disenfranchisement," (Simmons, 2017, p. 47). Not only are students of color more vulnerable to skills-based, limiting curriculums that are rarely relevant to their lived experiences and histories, students of color are also far more vulnerable to criminalization through disciplinary procedures and policies that are embedded in their experiences within schools and constitutive of white, middle-class values, as well. "These policies produce dramatic increases in economic and social inequality and intensified impoverishment and crises in everyday life. In turn, the state must rely increasingly on coercion (surveillance, policing, and prisons) to maintain social order," (Lipman, 2008, p.47). In many cases, schools are the first institutions to label and dispossess students of color as criminal or delinquent.

Philanthrocapitalism and Neoliberal Reform Logics

The neoliberal construction of a narrative of "failing schools" requires remedies. "The ways in which we understand social problems – and their remedies – are influenced by structures of power," (Goodman, 2015, p. 16). After the neoliberal turn of the 1980's and the 2008 financial crisis, increasing urban austerity created an opportunity for the furtherance of neoliberal remedies in education. According to Lipman (2016), "Urban austerity politics displace the crisis of banks and financial institutions onto workers, the poor, and the middle class through wage and benefit cuts, cuts in public services particularly to low-income communities, and privatization of public infrastructure and institutions. Education is a prime target…" (p.143). The mix of austerity economics, the neoliberal shift towards privatization, and the narrative of "failing schools" has created a prolific milieu for venture philanthropy. In a capitalist society, venture capitalists become venture philanthropists once they have amassed their fortunes. Today's venture philanthropists, also referred to as philanthrocapitalists, bear many similarities to the industrial philanthropists of decades past.

The need for educated "human capital" has long aligned with the interests of philanthrocapitalists and industrial philanthropists in the United States, and particularly within Black educational experiences.

> James Anderson (1988) notes that these philanthropists laid the groundwork for the developments of Black education in the United States: by and large, corporate philanthropic foundations favored industrial training and the maintenance of racial inequality. Watkins (2001) argues that the philanthropic architects of many educational institutions were faced with the same dilemma that many philanthropists are faced with today: how to ideologically reconcile

> great wealth with social altruism…In other words, after the Civil War, states Watkins, "America's apartheid had to be made workable. It needed to appear natural and ordained Beyond that, Blacks needed to be convinced that their lot was improving." (Goodman, 2015, p.17).

To justify their privilege and profits, philanthrocapitalists needed to ideologically reconcile their outsized wealth with the appearance of being socially altruistic towards those who were suffering from the racialized material conditions created by their inequitable accumulation of wealth. Philanthropic foundations, such as the Carnegie, Rosenwald, and Rockefeller Foundations, have a long history of "pushing a selfish agenda focused on keeping African Americans and the poor on the lower rungs of society," while purporting to have altruistic intentions for their educational philanthropy (Gasman, 2012, p. 9).

Our current neoliberal episteme is recognizable because it often allows corporate and financial actors to assert control over crafting educational public policy reforms with very little oversight or public accountability (Edwards, 2009; Gasman, 2012; Goodman, 2015; Lipman, 2007). "It gives capital direct control over institutions of social reproductions financed through public funds," (Lipman, 2007, p.169). The marketization of schooling creates competition for private, philanthropic funding and exacerbates inequities even as philanthrocapitalists claim benevolence. "While the intentions of Gates, Buffett, Bloomberg, and others may be framed as benevolent, it is also important to point out that in addition to increased political power and influence, the philanthropic sector enjoys a financial reward: tax-exempt status and sometimes charitable deductions for donors," (Goodman, 2015, p.18). Instead of redistributive tax policies that would tax the rich to benefit the poor

through public programs, the rich can find ways to become tax-exempt and then assert control over how their monies are invested in society – an ultimate form of accumulation embedded with social power. It's important to note that philanthropic foundations are private sector actors and are controlling public policies without any electoral influence from the public. Within a neoliberal multicultural society, the private sector and philanthrocapitalists are consolidating their economic power and cultural influence through their circuits of worth and privilege.

> White wealth accumulation has heavy costs for low-income communities of color though. The neoliberal declaration of a "failed system"…is not leveled explicitly against rich, predominantly white communities and public schools for whom high levels of historical investment and the benefits of cultural capital have resulted in high achievement, traditionally defined. Rather, the declaration of "system failure" is leveled against working-class and poor, predominantly nonwhite communities and schools. (Saltman, as quoted in Goodman, 2015, p. 20).

The creation of an educational marketplace allows philantrocapitalists to both accumulate more power and assets through their philanthropic organizations that fund the creation of new schools with their goals in mind while dispossessing public education as a public good.

3.2: Black Educational Experiences in the U.S.

The racist ideologies developed in colonial America have constructed a particular legacy of Black subjugation that is still very much a part of our culture and society today due to the moving substrate. During the 1700s, Blacks were about a fifth of the population and white, middle-class males and political leaders, dependent upon slavery, had to invent and construct reasons for the subjugation and control of African Americans. Rury (2013) contends,

> It took time for the institution of slavery to develop completely, but by the early 1700s there could be little doubt that Africans occupied a distinctly inferior social position, even compared to the most destitute European indentured servants. Explanations were constructed to account for racial differences in social and legal status, with the early development of racist ideology that would hold non-Whites inherently subservient to Europeans, and to Englishmen in particular. (p. 47).

In contemporary America, this has resulted in a system that disproportionately and differentially incarcerates Black Americans. Institutional structures in America disproportionately surveil and imprison Black citizens is a legacy that is deeply rooted in American's racist history and its ideologies of white supremacy and ant-Blackness (Thompson, 2016). American schooling is a crucial and critical institution that could change not only the day-to-day social practices that reinforce and re-inscribe racist ideologies that support the disproportionate incarceration of Black Americans, but also the larger neoliberal societal narratives that continue to actively subjugate and dispossess Black citizens and their communities.

Black American citizens have been consistently denied equitable resources, opportunities, and respect throughout American history. The normalized values ascribed to Eurocentric, middle-class, white, male experiences have worked to create a permanent underclass with inequitable and differential treatment that inherently continues to subjugate and colonize the lived experiences of Black citizens in America today (Massey & Denton, 1993; Sharkey, 2013). Reflecting on the history of segregation, attempts at desegregation, and the current resegregaton of U.S. schools is critical for the creation of a more democratically equitable and just society in America's future.

Desegregation, Integration, and Resegregation

In 1954 when *Brown versus the Board of Education* (Brown I) declared that separate cannot be equal, schools were mandated to desegregate. The mandate to desegregate schools would prove to be especially challenging for American society. One year after *Brown I,* the Supreme court asserted that desegregation should occur with "all deliberate speed" after many school districts, particularly in the South, were delaying desegregation efforts (Orfield & Eaton, 1996). Southern segregated school systems remained in tact and defiant of the Brown decisions until a decade later. "A decade after Brown, 98 percent of black students were still in all-black schools," (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2013, p. 10). In the Northern states, districts refused to even provide racial data that could measure segregation and avoided school desegregation efforts for nearly two decades (Orfield & Eaton, 1996).

A challenge to desegregating schools was, and still is, residential segregation. Often referred to as *de facto* segregation, because *de jure* segregation was no longer legally allowed, residential segregation was accepted by the Supreme Court in the 1974 *Milliken versus Bradley* case and reinforced in the 1976 *Pasadena City Board of Education versus Spangler* case. Simply put, since segregation was no longer a result of discriminatory practices on the part of state and local officials and racially neutral attendance patterns had been attempted in school districts, mandates from the Supreme Court to continue to enforce desegregation began to languish in the 1970s and 1980's (Welsh, 2009). Policy based segregation by state and local officials were no longer perceived to be the reason for segregation, but instead was a natural and

private choice of individuals. As a result, by 2011, American schools were as segregated as they had been previously in 1968 *(see Table 1 on p. 71).*

Beginning in the 1970s, the Supreme Court began straying from the *Brown* ruling. By 2007, the *Parents Involved In Community Schools versus Seattle School District No.1* case signaled that "in the desegregation battle…diversity in grade schools is no longer a compelling government interest and cannot be readily implemented," (Welsh, 2009, p.486). The number of Black students in majority minority schools, as of 2011, had rise to 77.1% (Rosiek & Kinslow, 2016). In abandoning the promises of *Brown,* America's public schools began a systemic and nationwide dispossession of the equal, educational rights of students of color. Although modest levels of desegregation did occur in the past, America's public schools never fully desegregated and provided equal educational opportunities for Black students, and other racially marginalized students. From approximately 1954 to 1974, however, racial desegregation in schooling was a priority of the government and seen as being in the best interest of the nation and enforced by court mandates. After 1974, continuing to integrate schools no longer converged with white interests and societal priorities within education.

The Judicial system, public policy and educational public policy were critical to enforcing desegregation efforts after the *Brown* ruling (Rosiek & Kinslow, 2016). Southern Black students faced massive white resistance to desegregation orders and those who had moved North found many white teachers to be racist and holding fixed, deficit views of racial differences in intelligence (Ravitch, 2000). In Southern

states where whites were supporters of school segregation, districts implemented choice plans (circuits of privilege and white interest convergence at work) which left segregation intact and provided white families with vouchers to avoid attending integrated schools (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2013).

Table 3.1*: Percent of Black Students in Majority White Schools, 1954-2011*

Year	Percent Black Students in Majority White Schools
1954	0
1960	0.1
1964	2.3
1967	13.9
1968	23.4
1970	33.1
1972	36.4
1976	37.6
1980	37.1
1986	42.9
1988	43.5
1991	39.2
1994	36.6
1996	34.7
1998	32.7
2000	31
2001	30.2
2006	27.7
2011	23.2

Note. Values are percentages. Adapted from "Brown at 60: Great Progress, a Long Retreat and an Uncertain Future," by G. Orfield, E. Frankenberg, J. Ee, and J. Kuscera. 2014, The Civil Rights Project, p. 10. Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey Data. Data prior to 1991 obtained from the analysis of the Office of Civil Rights data in Orfield, G. (1983). Public School Desegregation in the United States, 1968-1980. Washington, D.C.: Joint Center for Political Studies.

"Gradually, persistent efforts by courageous Black students and their families, backed by Civil Rights groups, chipped away at segregated schooling…Finally,

historic Supreme Court decisions in 1968 and 1969, *Green versus New Kent* county and *Alexander versus Holmes County*, marked the end of widespread Southern struggle against desegregation," (Rury, 2013, p.184). In the 1971 *Swan versus Charlotte –Mecklenburg* case, the courts approved mandatory bussing to combat residential segregation. The actions of the courts were essential to promoting integration within America's public schools.

Although court mandates and public policy attempted to act as constraints to individual choices in order to promote integration, educational equity, and to equalize circuits of worth, white Americans were still highly resistant to desegregation in both their residential neighborhoods and public schools. When applying the theoretical frames of this study, whites did whatever they could to resist integration by activating their circuits of privilege. At this time, circuits of worth, as evidenced by the courts enforcing integration, were working towards the inclusivity of students of color within white school settings. It's important to note though that the burden of bussing was still on Black students. The courts could effectively defend the educational rights of students of color, but still managed to assuage white circuits of privilege by bussing students of color into their majority white schools (white interest convergence).

It was also during these years, the late 1960s and the 1970s, when the migration of white families, known as "white flight," from urban to suburban areas took place and exacerbated de facto desegregation. During the 1960s, the psychologist Kenneth B. Clark, whose work was utilized in *Brown* to advocate for

desegregation, warned that meaningful segregation could only occur, "…if all of the schools in the system are raised to the highest standards, so that the quality of education does not vary according to income or the social status of the neighborhood," (Clark, as cited in Ravitch, 2000, p.379). However, throughout the 1960s, patterns of white flight eroded the tax bases of many cities (Rury, 2013) while nonwhite children became the majority of students enrolled in big-city school systems (Ravitch, 2000). "When Chicago was ordered by a federal judge to implement a desegregation plan in the late 1970s, there were hardly enough White students in the system to make it viable," (Rury, 2013, p.189). Whites were leaving urban centers en masse and taking their tax dollars, which funded local schools, with them. "Myriad individual choices – some of them frankly racist – seemed the key factor in explaining the difficulties of desegregation and resilience of segregation," (Erickson, 2013, p.123). Additionally, public housing and lending policies supported white Americans in making it seem as though de facto segregation was not intentional (Erickson, 2013; Orfield & Eaton, 1996). White Americans, whether in the South or the North, resisted both school and residential integration with Blacks at nearly every turn and, urban education became perceived as a national, educational crisis (Rury, 2013). Utilizing historical circuits of privilege, whites were able to derail the mandates of the courts through individual choices.

In response to the "growing crisis in urban education," President Lyndon Johnson pushed for and oversaw the enactment of the Elementary and Secondary

Education Act (ESEA) in 1965. The ESEA focused on creating opportunities for all Americans. According to Asen (2012),

> To create enabling conditions, government needed to act as a countervailing force that fostered individual initiative and innovation against the potentially constrictive force of large-scale social organizations and corporations. Yet policymakers did not seek an antagonistic relationship between government and market forces, nor did they reject the tenets of a capitalist economy…As a compensatory, countervailing institution, government could help maintain a space where productive conflict among economic actors would generate innovation and growth. (p.293)

The government would act as a regulating force on behalf of all citizens so that capitalism would create opportunities for economic growth. It's important to note that the lines of distinction between public and private spheres in the U.S. were still in tact at this time. Additionally, to address the resistance and refusal of white students and families to integrate their schools with Black students and families, the ESEA provided Title I of the act so that federal dollars went to schools specifically serving students from poverty backgrounds, (Rury, 2013). The ESEA sought to equalize the opportunities within schools. Title I explicitly addressed issues of inequality in educational resources and eventually had narrowed the spending gaps between urban and suburban districts by nearly half in the 1970s. Although Title I did not entirely equalize funding, it was a step towards providing more equitable educational opportunities and has remained the foundation for educational public policy in America since its enactment. In 1972, Congress and Nixon would approve one of the last major federal policies meant to assist school districts in desegregating their schools, the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA), regardless of Nixon's open stance against bussing and preference for neighborhood schools. However, by the late 1970s,

the desegregation movement was in clear decline and racial segregation in U.S. schools began increasing (Rosiek & Kinslow, 2016).

The shift from the government enforcing desegregation to not, largely took place during the late 1970s and 1980s (when neoliberal multiculturalism began to take shape) despite evidence that integration was making positive changes in schooling for Black Americans without impacting white achievement. "By the 1970s it had become clear that desegregation offered significant gains for minority students and that the most important of these gains were not measured by test score increases but by changes in students' life chances, (Boger & Orfield, 2005, p. 7). The Black-white achievement gap had closed significantly, more Black students successfully graduated from high school, and college-going rates for Black students increased, as well. However, other changes were taking place in Americans schools, so it is not possible to measure the precise impact of desegregation, but gains in Black students' life chances were most positive during those times. According to Orfield (2005),

> The least we can say is that (1) desegregation occurred at the same time as substantial educational progress for blacks and improved racial attitudes among whites, and (2) the conservative agenda of the late 1980s and the 1990s was implemented at the same time that reversals of some of those gains took place. (p.8)

Regardless of those gains, or perhaps because of them, policymakers began to de-prioritize efforts to maintain desegregation orders in all branches of the government. The courts began ruling on cases that worked to dismantle integration efforts and resegregation within U.S. schools has been increasing ever since (Kozol, 2005; Orfield, Kucsera, & Siegel-Hawley, 2012).

Amid court cases that intentionally and systemically worked to counteract and end desegregation orders (Rosiek & Kinslow, 2016) the National Commission on Excellence in Education published A Nation at Risk (ANAR) in 1983 (Popkewitz, 1991). Two years prior to this, President Reagan had shut down the ESAA program as part of his 1981 budget (Boger & Orfield, 2005) signaling a loss of support for desegregation efforts during his presidency. The "crisis in urban education" that was perceived to have taken shape in the late 1960s and 1970s, as a result of white flight, would become a call for massive reforms in education by the 1980s and 1990s due to declining achievement and perceived low standards in American schooling. The narrative of "failing schools" would create a "need" for market-based reforms by manufacturing a "crisis" in education. According to Rury (2013),

> *A Nation at Risk* was deeply flawed as an assessment of the nation's educational system, and subsequent research demonstrated that many of its assertions were mistaken. But it turned out to be highly effective as political theater, and helped to mobilize public opinion in favor of reform to raise expectations in the schools. Clearly, many Americans were concerned about the nation's status in the emerging global community, and saw education as linked to its success in this context. A direct line can be drawn from the prescriptions outlined in the report to the standards movement that later took shape in American education, culminating in *No Child Left Behind*. (p.218)

ANAR, citing (and romanticizing) data from the 1950s prior to desegregation efforts due to *Brown,* failed to contextualize the changes that had taken place within America's schools. Instead, the report focused on drops in tests scores as evidence that the U.S. was falling behind the rest of the world due to its failing schools. Yet this ignored the reality that, "…the educational system of the 1950s was an incomplete one that shunned many people marginalized by race and poverty,"

(Thomas, 2012, p.55). Regardless of its accuracy as an assessment of the quality of American schooling, the report and its recommendations gave way to a shift in educational priorities within the U.S. Particularly, "Exhibiting an economic frame, the report situated education in the context of a competitive individualism that represented education as an irreplaceable resource in the struggle for personal advancement…[and] the report cast education as a marketable commodity," (Asen, 2012, p. 303).

This is precisely the time, the late 1970s and early 1980s, when Erhenreich (2016) claims that Corporate Capitalism was shifting to Third Wave Capitalism and the lines between public and private would begin to significantly blur. Within educational public policy, the impetus for change was justified due to the "failure" of American schools to adequately educate all children for the job market and employer needs. "The history of proclaiming that public education in the United States is in crisis, of calling for wide-scale education reform, and of offering simplistic templates for that reform is long and essentially monolithic," (Thomas, 2012, p.47). Policymakers on both sides of the aisle subscribe to corporatist, neoliberal reforms in education that are working to gradually privatize U.S. schools (Goodman, 2006; Katz & Rose, 2013; Lipman, 2004; Mc Donald, 2014; Pedroni, 2007; Ravitch 2010). Government is now often seen as the problem, not the solution to the "crisis" in education. However, despite all of the claims regarding a decline in the quality of schooling in the U.S., evidence suggests that these claims are often overstated, if not, entirely off base. "Today, critics use data from international assessments to generate

a crisis mentality, not to improve public schools, but to undermine public confidence in them," (Ravitch, 2014, p.63). Neoliberal common sense works to denigrate, dispossess, and work towards privatizing the public schools as American lose confidence in them.

In addition to better life chances for all students, increases in high school graduation rates, and increases in the amount of students attending post-secondary educational institutions (Boger & Orfield, 2005), student test scores have been rising, as well. On international tests such as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) test, where disparities appear between American students and international students, economic factors should be taken into account. Scores amongst American students have not declined and in schools with low levels of poverty (less than 10% of students being poor), American students are quite competitive despite the crisis rhetoric of many educational reformers that favor accountability and school choice reforms (Erhenreich, 2016; Noguera, 2013; Ravitch, 2014; Thomas, 2012). The crisis in education is really a crisis in inequality. Yet, neoliberal school reformers know that the American public will be more willing to dismantle public education in favor of private, for-profit vendors if the public believes that schools are in crisis (Ravitch, 2014). Additionally, accountability and school choice reforms are often referenced as a means to achieving more equitable outcomes within American schools, however, this is not often the case in practice. Accountability often reinforces and justifies itself and school choice reforms due to its everyday practices. Accountability and school choice reforms, more specifically

former the No Child Left Behind (2002) policies, were essentially contradictory neoliberal multicultural policies purporting to be race conscious, yet were race neutral in practice.

White Supremacy and White Flight

The 1960s and 1970s were considered times in America's history when the goal of democratic equality was evident in educational reform policies and, more generally, in American society due to the Civil Rights movement (Labaree, 1997). However, in the South, massive white resistance to integration and a "school choice" movement worked to exacerbate segregation when faced with court mandates to desegregate. Orfield (1996) argues,

> By 1966 massive tests of choice were begun under court-ordered desegregation plans in the South. In Atlanta, for example, every student was given a form to express school preferences. Schools were required to accept transfer requests and to provide transportation for transfer students. But even under these favorable policies, backed by strong sanctions and a committed national administration, the choice system left schools in the South overwhelmingly segregated, with no whites choosing black schools and many black families afraid to choose white schools. The U.S. Civil Rights Commission reported that freedom of choice was preserving segregation and placing the entire burden for small-scale change on black students and their families. (p.5)

Additionally, racial ferment as part of the after effects of *Brown versus Board of Education's (1954)* ruling to desegregate schools (Herbst, 1996), white flight became a reality and white Americans left the inner cities in favor of suburban cities. Urban schools began to reflect this reality. Any perceived "gains" in equality as a goal of U.S. schooling due to *Brown* were relatively short-lived due to continued residential segregation. Shedd (2015) gives an example from Chicago where,

> On September 1980, the U.S. Justice Department filed a lawsuit against the Board of Education of the City of Chicago in which it alleged that the Board "operated a dual school system that segregated students on the basis of race and ethnic origin in violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution and Titles IV and VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The investigation found that school attendance zones had been gerrymandered to perpetuate segregation. (p.25)

Residential segregation, or de facto segregation, is viewed as an individual choice and therefore something that occurs naturally, not as the result of racist public policies (Sharkey, 2013). Despite the ruling in *Brown versus Board of Education* and mandates to integrate, American schools persist in being racially segregated with over half of Black children in industrialized cities attending over 90 percent minority schools by 2008, while 70 percent of white students attend schools that are at least 75 percent white (Hess, 2010). The decisions of individuals to choose the best schools through residential segregation has resulted in a system of dispossessed urban schools that essentially have created a two-tier, apartheid public schooling system.

Deficit Ideology

Deficit ideology, the concept of seeing differences as deficits and discounting sociopolitical contexts in favor of normalized, middle-class white experiences, has been present in American schooling since its inception. The idea of "fixing" a group of people to "fit" into society inherently places deficits within the individual instead of within the system. Gorski (2011) explains,

> Briefly, deficit ideology is a worldview that explains and justifies outcome inequalities – standardized test scores or levels of educational attainment, for example – by pointing to supposed deficiencies within disenfranchised individuals and communities. Simultaneously, and of equal importance, deficit ideology discounts sociopolitical context, such as the systemic conditions (racism, economic injustice, and so on) that grant some people

> greater social, political, and economic access, such as that to high-quality schools, than others. The function of deficit ideology…is to justify existing social conditions by identifying the problem of inequality as located within, rather than as pressing upon, disenfranchised communities so that efforts to redress inequalities focus on "fixing" disenfranchised people rather than the conditions that disenfranchise them. (pp. 153-154)

The deficit is located within the Black student and not within the white, middle-class, normative and "neutral" system that fails to acknowledge and value the experiences of Black American students. Deficit thinking is a form of anti-Blackness present in the everyday social practices that drive the conveyance of differentiated schooling in America.

Deficit ideologies and inequities in schooling and school funding have been a reality of our system and, contemporarily, according to Orfield (1996),

> The common wisdom passed down by teachers through the generations is that *Brown versus Board of Education* corrected an ugly flaw in American education and American law. We celebrate Brown and Martin Luther King Jr. in our schools, even when these very schools are still almost totally segregated by race and poverty. Millions of African American and Latino students learn the lessons of Brown while they sit in segregated classrooms…(p. 23)

Since America's system of schooling and educational policy reforms are seen as neutral, many teachers, even those in highly-segregated school contexts, will claim to be colorblind. According to Williams and Land (2006),

> Seeing color is not a terrible act, it is a reality. Considering race or ethnicity in the classroom or when making policy decisions should not be seen as taboo. It is these considerations that are used to help address the specific needs of the individual. However, it is this lack of initiative to see race that the authors charge anyone, albeit government officials, policymakers, school administrators, or teachers who are Black, White, Latina/o, or Asian who adhere to and hide behind color-blind ideology with the crime of contributing to the continued subordination of Blacks in America through educational policies and practices. (p.581)

Essentially, white supremacy is and will continue to be reproduced through systemic racism while America claims to be post-racial and meritocratic, despite evidence of educational opportunity gaps and persistent inequities. The resegregation (and the refusal to desegregate in the first place in many school districts) of American schools is creating a renewed, two-tiered, apartheid system of schooling in the U.S. while American society seems to have forgotten about attempts towards democratic (as opposed to differentiated) and integrated schooling (Kozol, 1991). According to Dumas (2014),

> Marginalized groups suffer doubly in relation to schooling: First, the drudgery and futility of the school experience itself, and second through the loss of hope for oneself individually, and for the group, collectively, in terms of improved social recognition and economic stability. Neither stage of suffering is deemed legitimate. In the first case, students are told, despite evidence to the contrary, that participating in schooling is not suffering, but an opportunity to improve one's life chances. Then, as the group continues to suffer as a result of inequitable access to social and educational opportunities, that too is deemed not a legitimate form of suffering, but the inevitable and natural result of failure – on the part of the individual *and/or the group* – to take full advantage of schooling, either as a result of laziness or lack of innate ability. (p.8)

White interest convergence ensures that the status quo favoring whites is reproduced and ideologically sustained while simultaneously working to normalize and internalize failure within Black America and American society.

3.3: Racism and Neoliberal Multiculturalism

Regardless of whether the crisis in American education was/is real or not, reform efforts since the publication of ANAR have been made with a "globalizing discourse of educational-economic crisis," (Koyama, 2013, p.86). This is consistent with the neoliberal episteme and its movement towards quasi-public goods. Education

is seen as a means to individual economic advancement while simultaneously being in constant crisis (Thomas, 2012). *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) in 2002 was authorized by President George W. Bush's administration as a reauthorization of Johnson's ESEA. "NCLB's Statement of Purpose explains its intent, '[c]losing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gap between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers," (Wun, 2014, p.468). Yet, while it brought national attention to achievement gaps, there is little to no mention that racial segregation since NCLB has been growing and rates of failure are most acute in low-income communities (Noguera, 2013). Central to understanding this contradiction of an equity-based reform exacerbating inequities are the ideas of colorblindness and the "new racism" that constitute neoliberal multiculturalism.

Implicit in America's imaginaries of meritocracy, individualism, and of being a post-racial society is the idea that race no longer "matters" within America and its institutions. Colorblindness contributes to a re-conceptualizing of racism as a "new" racism. According to Anagnostopoulos, Everett, & Carey (2013),

> Recent sociological and socio-linguistic studies in the USA document the pervasiveness of a "new" racism among white American youth. White youth in the USA reject affirmative action policies intended to address racial inequality on the grounds that such policies undermine the "American" values of individualism and meritocracy. Such justifications enable white youth to construct a positive self-presentation as non-racists even while the employ negative stereotypes of blacks and Latinos as intellectually inferior. This colorblind discourse is further characterized by white youth's use of racial reversal to position people of color who call attention to racial inequality as racists and whites as their victims. (p. 164)

In response to progress made during the Civil Rights movement, some white Americans subscribe to the idea of a post-racial America where white racial privilege no longer exists. The "common sense" of the "politics of respectability" has moved from the Black community into mainstream American discourses (Harris, 2014; Smith, 2016). Colorblindness and the "politics of respectability" both work to reinforce individualism and meritocracy in American society and schooling while situating any failure to succeed as deficits of that failing individual instead of as a failure of the system. The moving substrate of ideologies operates to both validate and activate whites as non-racist (circuits of privilege and whiteness as property) and activates circuits of dispossession for communities of color.

Even though schools continue to be highly segregated on the basis of race and class, and there are "no public officials who openly call for the maintenance of racially separate schools, there is almost no objection, much less outrage, raised over the continuation of de facto segregation. Today, schools throughout the country serving poor children are not only *racially separate but also profoundly unequal*," (Noguera, 2013, p.188). De facto desegregation is accepted as natural and as a product of individual choices. However, according to Erickson (2013),

> The rhetoric of choice and de facto segregation renders invisible the policies that foster residential segregation and those that linked segregated schools to segregated neighborhoods. Such invisibility contributes to colorblind suburban innocence, as University of Michigan historian Matthew Lassiter phrases it in *Silent Majority* (2006), through which white suburbanites exempt themselves from culpability for segregation and inequality. Embracing the rhetoric of choice, these suburbanites imagine their own success as the product of autonomous hard work, skillfully overlooking their reliance on extensive and effective government subsidy in housing and beyond. (p. 125)

Denying that current racial prejudices and inequities have their roots in past racial injustices, "new" racism is essentially a denial of structural racism in order to present oneself as non-racist while enjoying the advantages and privileges of being white in America (Anagnostopoulos, Everett, & Carey, 2013). "Racialized outcomes do not necessarily require racist actors," (Ehrenreich, 2016, p.121). Overt, individual racism remains the definition of being a racist, while the "new" racism is defined by the denial of white circuits of privilege and the advantages resulting from structural and institutional racism as racist acts.

Neoliberal Multiculturalism reinforces the American imaginaries of meritocracy, individualism, and of being post-racial through claims of colorblindness and a denial of racism. "All the recent studies on school integration clearly show that our schools are more segregated than at any time since *Brown versus Board of Education*, and yet it is almost impossible to hear a discussion of this fact," (Taubman, 2009, p.153). The implications that colorblindness ideology has for educational public policy discourse, formation, and enactment result in a silencing and neutralizing of race even when the policies claim to be intended to address inequities based upon race, class, and ableism. Naming racism is avoided in an attempt to represent racism as unusual instead of as an everyday feature of American life (Augoustinos & Every, 2010). According to Lipman (2008), "Post-Civil Rights racism posits a colorblind society in which race is no longer relevant. The neoliberal discourse of individualism and individual choice has become justification to replace

group rights with individual, case-by-case analyses of discrimination. This is the context in which accountability-based education policy unfolds," (p.49).

Shifting from Opportunities to Outcomes

Standards, accountability, and the school choice movement took the form of policy in 2002's NCLB legislation under President G.W. Bush. "Championing the key policy term of "accountability," President Bush announced that "my focus will be on making sure that every child is educated…Whereas Johnson construed education as a resource, seeking to give every child "as much education as he has the ability to take," Bush tied policy to outcomes," (Asen , 2012, p.306). This had the effect of shifting policy from "education to educated," or from the system to individuals. After all, to be educated is a trait of a person (Asen, 2012). Johnson and the ESEA focused policies on opportunities while NCLB shifted the focus from opportunities to outcomes. This also shifts the focus of inequities to considering inequitable outcomes instead of addressing the inequitable opportunities that result in those inequitable outcomes. Lee & Wong (2004) found that, "Although accountability policies appear to have shifted to a performance-driven approach, their function has been largely "regulatory" rather than "supportive," relying more on mandates and sanctions than on capacity building and rewards," (p.820). This is currently shifting as U.S. schools adjust to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, but the narrative of failing schools, particularly low-income schools serving students of color as failing, remains.

Neoliberal multiculturalism and Third Wave Capitalism can help to explain this contradiction, however. In markets, numbers matter – they are often *all* that

matters. Standardized test scores are quantifiable (Jordan, Brown, & Gutierrez, 2010) and easy to understand, representing a bottom-line that would be similar to measuring the success of a business or corporation. Test scores provide an easy metric so that schools can be "objectively" compared by the same data and data is believed to be race neutral (O'Neil, 2017). The gaps in achievement, existing long before standardization and accountability reforms were mandated, prove how "ineffective" schools are while educating student subgroups when the focus of policy is specifically on outcomes. "Over time, the numbers and classifications become take for granted facts – nearly unquestioned truths – that circulate across contexts as necessary "scientific evidence" for meeting the accountability requirements of NCLB and also for supporting the need for educational reforms of this nature," (Koyama, 2011, p.704). The perceived crisis that justified standardized tests being used as a measure of accountability reinforces itself and is the driving force behind continuing these policies. Accountability in schools is necessary, but the instruments and processes to measure and achieve these goals need to be problematized and interrogated given America's history of racism towards marginalized and underrepresented students and citizens. The "race neutrality" of practices and assessments contradicts the very intentions and goals the legislation intended to remedy. Schools, teachers, and individuals become the "problem," not the system. After all, the "system" is being race conscious in mandating measurements by subgroups. "Individualizing problems proves a useful strategy because it defines a reform agenda that ignores existing distributions of power and resources and, in the case of education, avoids dealing

with systemic inequalities," (Katz & Rose, 2013, p.227). NCLB, as a result, "Despite its beneficent claims to equalizing educational opportunities and outputs, the race-conscious mandate, according to Leonardo (2007), is an instrument of Whiteness," (Wun, 2014, p.470).

Under NCLB, sanctions were placed on schools where students did not meet the standardized testing goals imposed upon them that resulted in teachers and administrators being blamed for not adequately teaching their students. "There is tension between the kinds of knowledge commonly assessed on standardized tests and the kinds of knowledge students of color develop as a result of lived experiences, language use, social networks, and within the total sociocultural milieu of their daily existence. How this is resolved has implications for equity," (Jordan, Brown, & Gutierrez, 2010, p.158). Many schools have responded with a narrowed curriculum to better "serve" their students (Lipman, 2008; Ravitch, 2014) and focus mostly on tested content and skills. This is just one way in which racism becomes an everyday practice given that our schools are resegregating based on a double(d) segregation by both race *and* class. Another "race-neutral" effect is that lower test scores have provided a basis for comparison allowing low-performing schools to become stigmatized. NCLB, instead of holding schools "accountable" in order to improve them, did "…not take into account that school rankings would simply confirm racist and classist stereotypes about communities and schools, and thereby make low-performing schools more vulnerable to social isolation and abandonment," (Rosiek & Kinslow, 2016, p. 107). Accountability also justifies the school choice movement.

Since schools are "accountable" for particular outcomes, any students that attend a school that does not achieve those outcomes should then have the "choice" to attend, in theory, a "higher" achieving school. It's critical to consider though that Southern whites, seeking to avoid integration in schools with Black students, first utilized educational choice. The current reality of resegregation by race and class within U.S. schooling, school choice and its effects on desegregation need to be critically examined.

3.4: Critical Race Theory and Neoliberal Educational Reforms

Teasley and Ikard (2010) engaged in an analysis of the myth of a post-racial America and claim,

> Through our analysis, we have identified three inherent challenges to postracial thinking and discourse and subsequent public policy analysis: (a) It obfuscates the meaning of race, (b) it ignores gross economic disparities between racial and ethnic groups and their historical and contemporary antecedents, and (c) it disregards the enactment of social policy mechanisms that maintain economic disparities. To this end, the dominant culture attempts to hold underprivileged Black Americans and other marginalized non-White groups accountable for their participation in a meritocracy while simultaneously ignoring the reality of past and present racial and ethnic inequality. (p.422)

Utilizing Critical Race Theory (CRT) to analyze American educational public policy can reveal inconsistencies between the race-neutrality of neoliberal multiculturalism and the resulting inequities that Teasley and Ikard have identified in their analyses of "post-racial" public policies. NCLB, and more generally reforms aligned with standardization, accountability, and school choice, are predicated on the American imaginary of a post-racial, meritocratic society. CRT is highly useful as a lens for exploring contemporary issues of race and schooling in America. It's "an

interdisciplinary body of scholarship aimed at revealing ideologies and social structures that collude in the creation and maintenance of racial injustice with the expectation that such interrogations will foster empowerment and help to eliminate interconnected structures of oppression," (Ross, 2010, p.213). Additionally, CRT is regarded as a social justice project that links practice and theory within the field of education to challenge dominant ideologies through experiential knowledge, (Solorzano & Yasso, 2001). Education reforms are multifaceted and interconnected because they align and connect public policy discourse to policy formation and to day-to-day practices within public schools. In order to change the day-to-day realities and experiences of students of color (Stovall, 2005), who are typically negatively affected by "race neutral" policies within the era of accountability, educators should examine their daily work through the lens of CRT. "CRT suggests that racially neutral educational laws and policies may disguise the salience and impact of racism in schools and limit equity as a critique," (Heilig, 2011, p.19). Utilizing CRT provides a framework for investigating the ways in which educational equity is complicated by the "common sense" of meritocracy, individualism, and the day-to-day realities of a supposedly post-racial America (Dumas, Dixson, & Mayorga, 2015).

Indeed, much of the application of CRT "…applies insights of how race functions to critique rules, norms, standards, and assumptions that appear "neutral," but which systemically disadvantage or "subordinate" racial minorities," (Vargas, 2003, p. 1). White Americans are ill equipped to racially understand the impact of

colorblindness, presumably post-racial public policies, and the everyday impacts of the intersection of race and accountability discourse on schooling because it would shatter the American imaginaries of a post-racial meritocracy that allows them to self-present as non-racists. All educators need to contend with the "understanding [that] race is not just an interesting footnote; it is an integral challenge at the level of practice," (Vargas, 2003, p.13).

In applying the concept of interest convergence specifically to an analysis of accountability and school choice, it becomes clear that American educational public policy is not "presumably" equity focused, but instead it carries indications of state sanctioned anti-Blackness and white supremacy. According to Rhodes (2011), "…the influence of social programs with new "disciplinary" (sometimes called "paternalistic") features, which impose more stringent behavioral requirements on beneficiaries, employ testing and reporting to monitor recipient performance, and impose sanctions for non-compliance," (p.519). Standardized testing, accountability, and school choice have overwhelmingly been "subtractive" for students of color. While accountability is necessary within schools, the idea of "who" schools are accountable to it critical. "Moreover, policies that regulate and punish schools in African American communities contribute to the representation of these communities, and especially Black youth, as undisciplined and in need of control," (Lipman, 2008, p.53). Educators who feel they are accountable to the youth and communities they teach could likely have different day-to-day practices within their classrooms than

teachers who primarily perceive that they are accountable to district, state, and federal policies.

The idea of interest convergence also brings to light why neoliberal reformers would choose to pursue and promote public-private and private educational reform policies while utilizing equity as their motivation for necessary reforms. CRT, and interest convergence specifically, show "…that while political elites have become particularly adept at avoiding the use of the category of "race," supplanting it with de-racialized terms such as "culture," there are nonetheless occasions when "race" is worth the risk in allowing a political speaker to conjure fear inducing imagery and causal inferences in way that advance a political project," (Augoustinos & Every, 2010, p. 254). Accountability and school choice discourse is utilized to justify the privatization of public schooling due to the perceived failures schools to raise student achievement scores.

Neoliberal, market theory reforms look to choice as a solution without looking at the evidence from years of implementing choice and its effects on achievement and equity.

> Forgetting the history of choice policies in our country and ignoring research from other nations showing that unrestricted choice produces unequal, segregated schools that reinforce the underlying stratification of society, policy makers have been swept up in the faith in markets to solve deeply embedded educational and societal problems. (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2013, p. 258)

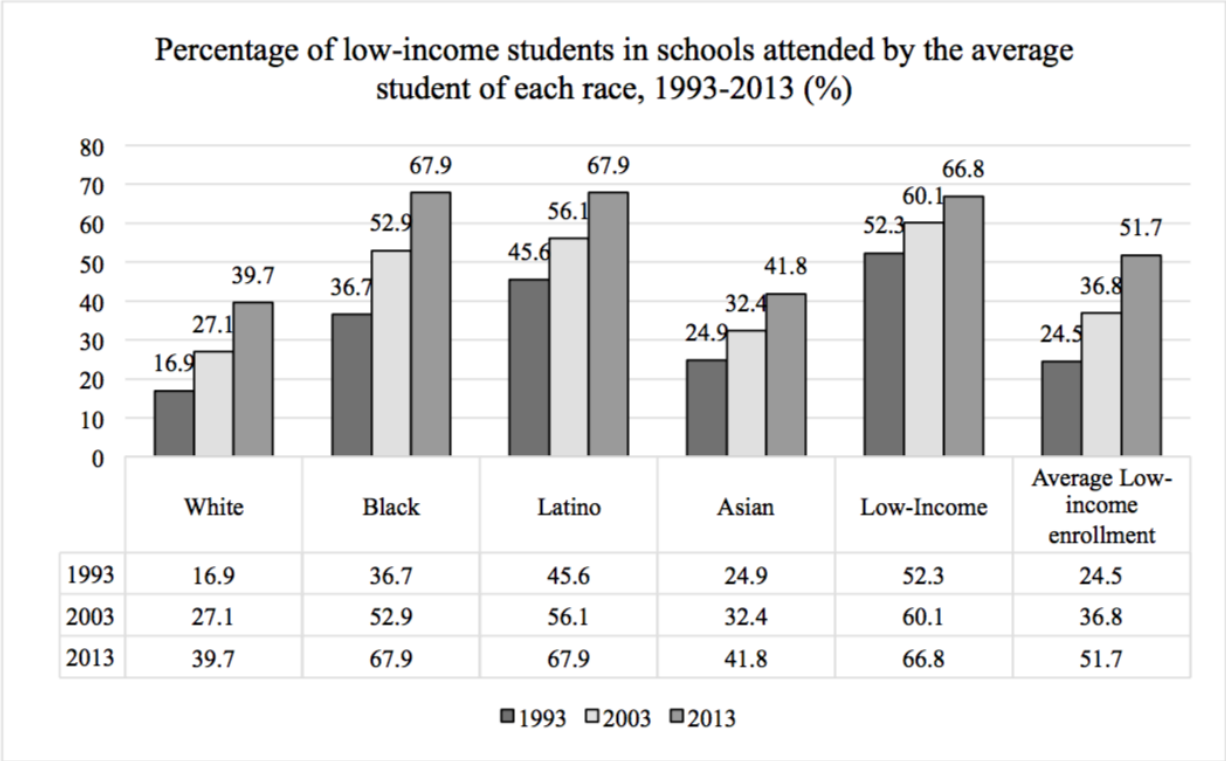
Because accountability measures and school choice are nearly irrelevant in affluent communities, allowing choice and accountability to shape urban public schooling means that affluent, white communities are insulated from the effects of these policies

and maintain the status quo. "Since choice for integration, unlike pure market approaches, often requires change in the schools of privileged groups, opening them to some less-privileged families, it is far more controversial then market approaches," (Orfield, 2013, p. 56). Although integration theory has the goal of creating of diverse schools with broadened curricula to improve *all* students' life chances and a community's race relations by dealing with some of the underlying social inequalities that market theory reinforces, white Americans remain hesitant at best and entirely resistant at worst. In other words, choice and accountability remain as policy initiatives because interest convergence allows them to appear concerned with equity while maintaining white privilege. In fact, white Americans who believe in market reforms even utilize race and poverty for their own purposes precisely because of political interest convergence. "In 2010, newly elected school board members affiliated with the Tea Party movement tried to block [a] this successful socioeconomic integration plan in favor of a school choice plan that would almost certainly have resegregated schools by race and class," (Scott, 2013, p.88). Any model of desegregation must ensure, first and foremost, that white Americans are happy with the system without regard for the impacts on students and communities of color.

CRT's interest convergence helps to explain why accountability and testing have led to increased rates of segregation, apartheid schools, and a two-tiered system of education in the U.S. (Greene, 2008). According to *E Pluribus…Separation*, a study conducted by The Civil Rights Project, apartheid schools are those schools

where 99% or more of the student population is one race, ethnicity, and/or economic class (Orfield, Kucsera, & Siegel-Hawley, 2012). Massey and Denton's (1993), publication of *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* argue that, "Most Americans vaguely realize that urban America is still a residentially segregated society, but few appreciate the depth of black segregation or the degree to which it is maintained by ongoing institutional arrangements and contemporary individual actions," (p. 1).

Graph 3.2*: Percentage of low-income students in schools attended by the average students of each race, 1993-2013*



	White	Black	Latino	Asian	Low-Income	Average Low-income enrollment
1993	16.9	36.7	45.6	24.9	52.3	24.5
2003	27.1	52.9	56.1	32.4	60.1	36.8
2013	39.7	67.9	67.9	41.8	66.8	51.7

Note. Values are percentages. Adapted from: Brown at 62: School Segregation by Race, Poverty, and State by G. Orfield, J. Ee, E. Frankenberg, and G. Siegel-Hawley, Civil Rights Project, UCLA, May 16, 2016. Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey Data.

Significantly more Black and Latino students experience concentrations of poverty in their schools than do white and Asian students (see Graph 3.2). The choice movement and neoliberal discourses within education that favor charter schools and vouchers, proposed to be a means to achieving equity in education, are exacerbating segregation within urban schools and leading to higher levels of inequity both by race and class for Black and Latino students (Noguera, 2003; Orfield & Frankenberg, 2013; Rosiek & Kinslow, 2016; Sharkey, 2013).

In 1991, U.S. educational reform policies became focused on standards-based reforms and school choice, with the innovation of charter schools happening during that same year. (Kozol, 2005; Orfield, Frankenberg, & Assoc., 2013). A once overtly racist policy, school choice, has now been recast as equity-minded within the contemporary accountability and school choice reform movements. Despite the resulting resegregation and increasing inequities of the day-to-day practices aligned with the policy's enactment, white interest convergence keeps accountability and school choice discourse politically favored amongst the majority of policymakers, regardless of their political affiliation, due to circuits of privilege that underly American's power relations.

3.5: Exo-Level Contexts

Chicago's Neoliberal Conditions

Changes and reforms within the city of Chicago and within the Chicago Public School system during the early 2000s are critical to understanding the citywide context of the charter school where data collection took place and how their charter

came to be conceived of and founded. Without the neoliberal educational reform movement that was put into motion with the Commercial Club of Chicago and the Renaissance 2010 project, the school would not have had a clear path for its origins. Pauline Lipman and Eve Ewing have both chronicled the neoliberal reform movements in Chicago from the lens of schools that were being shut down to accommodate a move from a public to private-public system (Ewing, 2018; Lipman, 2011). Their work has been probing and essential for understanding what happens to students, teachers, and families who are experiencing active, stigmatized circuits of dispossession. Both researchers have been steadfast and allied with movements that fight to keep local, neighborhood, public schools open when Chicago and CPS labeled their schools as failing and moved to close and phase out their existences. For that reason, they will figure prominently in the exo-level and micro-level discussions of neoliberal reforms within the city and within CPS.

However, this study diverges from their work in that it is a story of how a charter school that was tasked to replace public schools (via the New Schools for Chicago funding project), while utilizing school choice reforms by making a "competitive market" for parents and students, fared during its years of operation. The school closed permanently in the year following the study. The reasons for this failure can give us insights into how neoliberal reforms create, "solve," and then recreate problems to be fixed by an expanding educational marketplace. The story of dispossession and the circuits of worth that converged to create the fertile ground for the charter school in this story are worth documenting and reflecting upon. Afterall,

Ewing's and Lipman's work both show the trauma and anguish families feel when their neighborhood schools shut down, but what happens after that? How do the neoliberal charter schools that replace public, neighborhood schools fare? This study is an object of reflection for considering how efficacious and successful the educational neoliberal reform movement is in a city like Chicago.

Educators and policy makers need to examine not only the fight to keep public schools, but also the lived experiences and lived realities that manifest in the schools that are meant to replace those public schools when they are phased out and closed. Are they replaced with schools that serve communities better? Are neoliberal education reformers able to leverage the market to make a public good more cost-efficient (by relying on private-public funding models instead of tax-payer funding) while still maintaining or raising student achievement? Or is the move to a quasi-public school system hurting children and families and destabilizing lives through circuits of dispossession? While this study is a case study of only one charter school's experiences, the lessons that can be learned and reflected upon by reformers who advocate for more public resources and for those who advocate for the marketization of public education are deep and rich. However, before the micro-level contexts are discussed and explored, it is essential to have a clear understanding how the city of Chicago and the CPS system created the realm of possibilities that allowed for the establishment of the charter school in this study.

Pauline Lipman (2011) asserted that "Chicago is more than a rich example. It is an incubator, test case, and model for the neoliberal urban education agenda.

Chicago is where big city mayors go to see how to restructure their school systems. It was Arne Duncan's prototype on his national road show to promote school closings and education markets after he was appointed U.S. Secretary of Education in 2008," (p.19). The charter school in the study on which this dissertation reports is just one of the more than 100 charter schools that was proposed to replace failing neighborhood schools as part of the Renaissance 2010 vision and the New Schools for Chicago funding programs. Lipman has written extensively on the formation of the Commercial Club of Chicago and the neoliberal reforms that were enacted by this group of appointed, corporate elites (Lipman, 2007). Chicago and CPS, as an incubator for national education reforms, began in 1995 with reforms based on high stakes testing and accountability which later became part of the model for the Bush's federal 2001 No Child Left Behind legislation (Lipman, 2007). That Arne Duncan and Obama followed suit with their 2009 Race to the Top program (RTTT) shows the alignment in neoliberal reform movements (regardless of political party affiliation) that began with Reagan's 1983 ANAR report.

> Secretary Duncan and his colleagues at the U.S. Department of Education (many of them drawn from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation) devised a competition for the states called Race to the Top (RTTT), which offered a prize of billions of dollars in a time of fiscal austerity. To be eligible to compete, the states had to change their laws and agree to certain conditions. Almost every state agreed to do what Duncan wanted in hopes of winning part of the Race to the Top prize money, but only eighteen states actually got a share of the bonanza. It was a brilliant plan that accelerated widespread adoption of Duncan's ideas about standards, testing, accountability, and choice, but it ultimately failed because its remedies were no more effective than those in Bush's NCLB. (Ravitch, 2020, p.23)

Obama, Duncan, and neoliberal reformers regardless of party affiliation utilized Chicago's model at the national level despite evidence of institutional dispossession and its effects on communities of color within the Chicago Public School system.

The call to take over public education through neoliberal reform policies has been steady and consistent since the 1980's, the beginning of the U.S.'s neoliberal turn nationally. Lipman (2007) asserted,

> On June 24, 2004, Andrew J. McKenna, Chairman of the Civic Committee of the Commerical Club, declared, 'Chicago is taking the lead across the nation in remaking urban education. NO other major city has launched such an ambitious public school choice agenda' (Civic Committee Press Release, 2004). Mc Kenna was referring to Mayor Daley's announcement of Renaissance 2010. The plan would radically transform public educationa in Chicago by introducing markets into education, shifting control away from elselected school councils and toward the unelected Commercial Club and substantially reducing the power of the teachers' and other school emplyee's unions….A year earlier, the Club's Civic Committee issued *Left Behind,* a report that called for the 'creation of at least 100 public charter schools that increase parental choice and put meaningful competitive pressure on chronically failing neighborhood schools.' (Lipman, 2007, pp. 164-165).

The schools that would be phased out and closed were in predominantly Black and Brown neighborhoods that would (re)create circuits of dispossession that the city of Chicago has long enacted towards communities of color (Ewing, 2018; Lipman, 2011). The neoliberal, urban reform agenda for schools in Chicago converges with a long history of white flight and de facto segregation that has been part of the fabric of the city of Chicago for decades preceding these new proposed changes.

While issues of white flight took place throughout the late 1960s and into the 1980s, legislation that was meant to hold CPS to task occurred in the 1980. According to Ewing (2018),

> The US Department of Justice alleged that the district was illegally segregating students through practices that included creating and altering school attendance boundaries…maintaining "severally overcrowded and thereby educationally inferior schools in such a way as to identify…those schools as intended for Black students and less crowded schools as intended for white students," permitting white students to transfer easily to avoid their assigned schools…" (p.83).

Nearly 30 years after *Brown versus the Board of Education,* one of the largest urban school districts was still actively allowing for white circuits of privilege to impact Black students, schools, and communities. The district agreed to a consent decree and committed to desegregate as many schools as they could, however, by 2009, the consent decree was dissolved as the district only enrolled only 9% white students (Ewing, 2018). Essentially, the city of Chicago, having high rates of de facto segregation, had the opportunity to remake public education as a truly, high quality public good that could have increased the circuits of worth for communities of color living within the city. The neoliberal urban agenda, in full alignment with the macro-level trends of the U.S. and the world, dictated the realms of possibilities for public officials in the city though and Chicago opted to take up private-public ventures instead of redistributive wealth policies. One of the private-public ventures was the school that is the focus of this study.

The private-public ventures of philantrocapitalists provide private funding for public schools. Chicago cut citywide budgets for public goods and, "Divested public schools are a fertile opportunity for venture philanthropists to proffer money and solutions. In collaboration with the state, they deploy resources and expertise to impose their interventions, following a colonial model of 'we know what's best for

you.' Their market driven agenda is legitimated by systems of accountability and discourses of racial pathology," (Lipman, 2014, p.247). In 2009, the Gates Foundation committed $40 million in funding for the proliferation of charter schools as part of their Charter Compact (Lipman, 2014). The Gates Foundation Charter Compact competitive grants program allowed the city of Chicago to announce plans in 2012 to authorize 100 new schools in the next five years, 60 of which would be charter schools. In 2013, however, the mayor-appointed school board concurrently voted to close 50 schools (the most ever closed at one time in a city) as part of a "right sizing" plan to contend with under enrollment in "inefficient" schools with excess seats (Lipman, 2014). Having concurrent plans to both close neighborhood schools (with fully public funding) while opening private-public venture schools (charters and turnaround schools) with non-guaranteed funding renewals (because they are based on competitive grants) is an example of how circuits of worth operate. "In low-income neighborhoods, charter schools draw students away from public schools the state has neglected, hastening the closing of neighborhood schools and breaking connections…" (Lipman, 2017, p.13) while also opening new charter schools.

The convergence of neoliberal multiculturalism, philantrocapitalism, school choice, the crisis narrative of "failing" schools, accountability surveillance practices, the historical dispossession of communities of color (both in Chicago and in the U.S.), the larger trends towards dismantling public welfare policies for neoliberal and austere reform policies, historical segregation, and circuits of white privilege and

interest convergence all aligned with social actors to create the fertile ground for the school in this study to be born. In short, it's a complex milieu that converged based upon the ideological moving substrate that undergirds the field of possibilities for neoliberal educational reform. It's important to note that the policies and enactment of the Renaissance 2010 program were reform policies. The policies were never intended to transform the system, but to reform a "failing" system in crisis, it is a subtle, yet important distinction that will hold more weight as the data analysis proceeds.

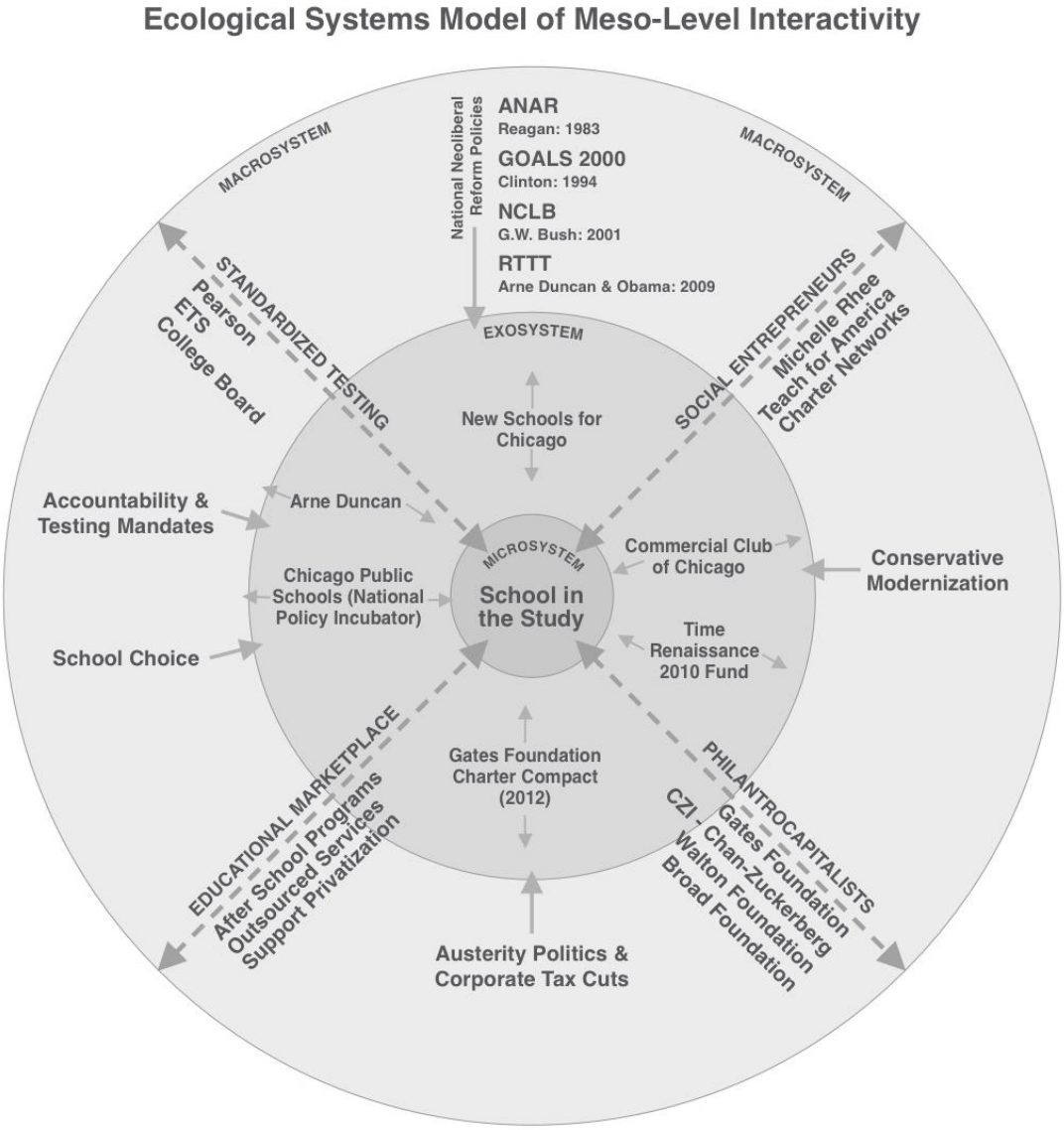
3.6: Meso-level Interactivity and the Effects of Dispossession

The social actors at the meso-level that allow for the interactivity of the nested, ecological systems create the tangible forms that allow for national (macro) and citywide (exo) level policies to be enforced at the school (micro) level. The meso-level actors and forms (in the following model, these are represented by standardized testing, social entrepreneurs, philanthrocapitalists, and the educational marketplace) carry the policies into the school setting. Since the charter school also relied upon macro-, exo-, and meso-level alignments for its creation through grants and start-up funding, it's a particularly useful model for understanding how pervasive neoliberal reforms were in shaping the experiences of the charter school in the study.

The model on the next page (see Figure 3.3) is a snapshot of the nested ecological systems that applied to the school during its inception and launch. Many of the exo-level conditions that allowed for the charter's creation are no longer relevant in the Chicago Public School system. However, understanding how complex

and expansive neoliberal reforms were at each level of ecology helps to explain how this charter school came into being.

Figure 3.3*: Ecological systems model of Meso-level interactivity for the charter school in the study*



The social entrepreneurs in this study were responding to the field of possibilities as they existed at the time of the school's launch. When CPS enforced it's "right sizing"

initiative and the Gate's Foundation monies flowed into CPS through the charter compact, the school leaders in this study had the funding they needed to create a high-performing school that they believed would provide equitable, educational solutions for its students and a rich environment for teachers' professional development. The school leaders, as social entrepreneurs, believed that the field of possibilities represented by the macro- and exo-level policy initiatives and the meso-level actors and forms would create a school culture that would provide circuits of privilege and accumulation, through the creation of a high-quality educational experience, for their students. However, the school leaders did not have a full understanding of the historical and institutional dispossession that the community faced from macro- and exo-level systems.

Racialized Trauma and Circuits of Worth

The ideological moving substrate that nourishes power relations and results in differentiated circuits of worth are not understood as having merely "stigmatized" educational consequences for low-income communities and communities of color, but are instead understood as educational dispossession. Additionally, the idea that race and poverty "intersect in complex ways" adds layers to investigating how race operates (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). Neoliberal multiculturalism that often situates wealth as a proxy for race (i.e., whiteness as property) can downplay the historical and inter-generational injuries that Black Americans face in the United States.

Utilizing scholarship from the field of social work in conjunction with critical educational scholarship can help to contextualize how power operates when someone is subjected to multiple generations of circuits of dispossession. Neoliberal multiculturalism, with its claims to race neutrality and the conflation of meritocracy with the marketplace, cannot deny the inter-generational and historical lived experiences of Black Americans with ancestry that endured American slavery, Black Codes, and Jim Crow laws. This study conceptualizes the ideological moving substrate (white supremacy, racial liberalism, and paternalism) as injurious and capable of inflicting ideological traumas that are particularly racialized. "In America, nearly all of us, regardless of our background or skin color, carry trauma in our bodies around the myth of race," (Menakem, 2017, p. 14). Those who are born in and grow up in Black bodies experience race differently than those who are born in white bodies. Historians, sociologists, social workers, and many other have detailed the differential experiences since the founding of American slavery and yet it took the American Psychological Association until 2019 to even propose guidelines for American psychologists around race and ethnicity, even while providing guidelines for many various groups such as women, LGBTQ people, older people, and disabled people (Carter & Pieterse, 2020)[2]. Neoliberal multiculturalism, with race neutrality as a key tenet, also allows for ambiguous language which "makes it easy to encourage acceptance of cultural pluralism…the terms do not threaten most Whites, and the

[2] Carter and Pieterse published their book *Measuring the Effects of Racism* in 2020. At the time of the book's publication, the proposed guidelines for the American Psychological Association on race and ethnicity were still not policy.

ambiguous language allows people to think of themselves, regardless of race, as an oppressed "minority" due to their gender, age, geography, sexual orientation, social class, and so on. Thus, race is obscured and diminished," (Carter and Pieterse, 2020, p. 76). Yet, race is the only lived experience in American history that was collectively associated with legal bondage for Black Americans.

Understanding that "race-related stressors are environmental in nature and include structural circumstances such as poverty, and residential segregation, work-related experiences, assault, and life-event stress," (Carter and Pieterse, 2020, p.86) means that schooling experiences, especially those that disconnect and stigmatize entire communities, can be experienced as collective, ideological (and often racialized) traumas. The effects of racism, which generated from socio-political and situational environments as opposed to individual dispositions, are understood as having the potential for psychological and emotional injuries both at the collective (group identity) and individual levels. This study will focus on the collective, ideological (cultural) injuries and traumas that manifest due to differentiated citizenry and differentiated circuits of worth inherent to power relations and the moving substrate within neoliberal multiculturalism. "Theorists of cultural trauma…emphasize that it is the social environment that largely determines whether an event is experienced as traumatic," (Krondorfer, 2016, p. 91). Krondorfer (2016) continues and explains that theoretical perspectives can be observed by those who see trauma as a single event and those that "look at trauma as the result of an insidious web of abiding social justices, such as colonialism, apartheid, or racism," (p. 91).

When you consider that Lipman (2014) considers venture philanthropy (philanthrocapitalism) to be a "colonial project to remake urban education" and asserts that Chicago is undergoing "a new colonialism" where "A few super wealthy individuals decide what is best for low-income communities of color," (Lipman, 2014, p.242) it's clear to see that neoliberal educational reforms are not just problematic, they are dispossessive assaults that can cause collective injuries and cultural, ideological traumas to be inflicted upon already historically stigmatized and dispossessed communities.

The ideological moving substrate of neoliberal reforms are symptomatic of "the white man's burden, which referred to white people's obligation to control, direct, and 'civilize' all those they believed to be from inferior race…for their own good, of course. In this way these 'uncivilized' people could become cultured citizens ready to play their part in their own development," (DeGruy, 2005, p.67). Paternalism through philanthrocapitalism (venture philanthropy) is more subtle, yet it is the "white man's burden" in a new, more ambiguous package. Philanthrocapitalists who "want to align their corporate investments in education with their corporation's core business and bottom-line needs," (Gasman, 2012, p. 11) due to their neoliberal assumptions about the race neutrality of the market, are influencing urban, public education policies based upon falsified, neoliberal crisis narratives of "failing" schools, deficit ideology, and racialized pathologies (Lipman, 2014).

It is beyond the scope of this study to consider the many effects of racism that manifest as individual, racialized traumas. However, collectives are made up of

individuals and for that reason, it is important to note developments in regards to epigenetics. Bessel Van Der Kolk (2014) explained that,

> Recent research has swept away the simple idea that "having" a particular gene produces a particular result. It turns out that many genes work together to influence a certain outcome. Even more important, genes are not fixed; life events can trigger biochemical messages that turn them on or off by attachment of the gene (a process called methylation), making it more or less sensitive to messages from the body. While life events can change the behavior of the gene, they do not alter its fundamental structure. Methylation patterns, however, can be passed on to offspring – a phenomenon known as epigenetics. Once again, the body keeps the score, at the deepest level of the organism. (p. 154).

Epigenetics can help to explain inter-generational trauma passed down through a family line. "Trauma also spreads impersonally, of course, and has done so throughout human history. Whenever one group oppresses, victimizes, brutalizes, or marginalizes another, many of the victimized people may suffer trauma, and then pass on that trauma response to their children as standard operating procedure," (Menakem, 2017, p. 38). Both internally, through genes, and externally, through learned behaviors of trauma responses and coping mechanisms (both positive and negative coping mechanisms), trauma can be passed down intergenerationally. For descendants of Black slaves, Dr. Joy DeGruy (2005) defines "Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome as a condition that exists when a population has experienced multigenerational trauma resulting from centuries of slavery and continues to experience oppression and institutionalized racism today. Added to this condition is a belief (real or imagined) that the benefits of the society in which they live are not accessible to them," (p. 105). It is critical to understand that DeGruy is not suggesting that all Black Americans feel victimized and oppressed, but that there are

real, lived experiences and multigenerational reasons for the continued impacts and effects of racism. Equally important are the resiliencies that the Black families and communities have cultivated to positively cope with institutional oppressions and continued modern day racisms. For the purposes of this study, it is essential to establish ideological trauma as a real, multigenerational and collectively, racialized experience that exist for Black Americans because of differentiated citizenship, apartheid schooling, and circuits that actively seek to dispossess their opportunities for equality all while living in a neoliberal multicultural "meritocracy," be it within educational settings or the marketplace.

In the same way that ideological trauma and racialized stressors can be inflicted and experienced both individually and collectively as a Black American, so can race be experienced individually and collectively as a white American. White Americans' effects of white supremacy manifest in very different ways because white supremacy creates circuits of worth attached to privilege, accumulation, and property. White Americans who do not learn the complex and interwoven histories of capitalism, white supremacy, liberalism, and paternalism (the ideological moving substrate) can fail to see that the grand narrative of Eurocentric experiences includes their demographics historically accumulative experiences at the dispossession and exclusion of the historical experiences of Black, Latinx, Asian, and Indigenous demographic groups. When one sees the world from one, grand historical narrative experience/lens, one might fail to fully understand the effects of slavery, genocide, and oppression that accompanied the founding of the United States as a colonial

project. When police forces are disproportionately incarcerating and murdering Black American citizens who they are sworn to protect and serve, the consequences of anti-Blackness, racialized pathologies, and white supremacy are laid bare. The lack of empathy that "new racism" allows for some white Americans to operationalize (All Lives Matter, banning anti-racist trainings, the January 6th insurrection of the capital, the exclusions of histories outside of Eurocentric frameworks, and the topical attack on Critical Race Theory as racist) amounts to a collective form of white apathy and white narcissism (regardless of phenotype) that serve to perpetuate racist, cultural ideas and that will ensure racism *will be* endemic to America's institutions. While many white Americans are willing to learn more about how racism manifests to better understand and empathize with the lived experiences of communities of color, progress is highly uneven, tediously slow (for historically dispossessed communities), and often based on political partisanship and geographic location. White apathy and collective white narcissism allows for neoliberal multiculturalism to be advanced and operationalized as a colorblind, educational imaginary of America as a meritocracy.

Collective, white narcissism can be understood as the belief that whites as a group are "exceptional but not sufficiently recognized by others," this leads to intergroup hostilities towards those outside of whiteness (Golec de Zavala & Lantos, 2020, p. 273). In a neoliberal multicultural society that obscures and diminishes race, this takes a form of white, racial apathy; the inability to care or even understand that those who are not white experience America and her institutions in ways that can

cause collective, racialized traumas to be internalized by differently situated others. In the context of neoliberal reforms, this can take a particularly complex and opaque turn. The paternalism inherent to neoliberalism and philanthrocapitalism has made room for social entrepreneurs and the "professional and managerial new middle class," (Apple, 2001). Apple (2001) explains that this group is rapidly growing and gaining power, and that "Members of this fraction of the upwardly mobile professional and managerial new middle class do not necessarily believe in the ideological positions that underpin the conservative alliance. In fact, in other aspects of their lives they may be considerately more moderate and even "liberal" politically," (p.57). However, twenty years later after the proliferation of neoliberal, choice reforms, charter schools. and the concept that "there is no alternative" (TINA) which is inherent to neoliberalism, white narcissism can manifest in ways that are more sympathetic, appear politically liberal, and are unconsciously aligned with CRT's concept of interest convergence. Instead of a white collective narcissism that includes intergroup hostilities, a white, collective narcissism that recreates circuits of dispossession within Black educational experiences while simultaneously reifying white circuits of accumulation and privilege as neoliberal education reformers and social entrepreneurs takes shape (purporting to resist white supremacy) due to the centrality of whiteness as a lived experience: this is how power operates and organizes relations within neoliberal school reforms and where our story of dispossession at the micro-cultural level begins…

Charter Four: Findings - Micro-level Manifestations of Circuits of Worth

For the purposes of this study, a neoliberal charter school in Chicago's exo-level conditions is understood to be a charter within the Chicago Public School system (CPS) that took form during the aforementioned Renaissance 2010 reform and that is aligned with neoliberal logics and imaginaries. The exo-level context and institutional environment at CPS during the Renaissance 2010 project favored non-community-based charters run by "institutional entrepreneurs" (Colomy, 1998) and/or charter networks. Since the charter school that took part in the study had no ties to the community where it was based until after the founding team decided they intended to open a charter school, the school in this study is understood as a neoliberal charter school that was established by institutional entrepreneurs. Even though many of the founding team's ideas for the school's vision and mission were meant to push against and resist some neoliberal reforms, ultimately, the origin story of the school and the circuits of privilege utilized to gain access to the charter's approval were isomorphic with the neoliberal institutional environment of CPS. The non-isomorphic intentions will be detailed in a section about the school's vision.

The concepts of isomorphism/non-isomorphism (George, et al., 2006), institutional entrepreneurs (Colomy, 1998), threat rigidity (George, et al., 2006; Olsen & Sexton, 2009), and loose coupling (Weick, 1976) will inform the analysis. The same macro-level and exo-level analysis of the tenets of Critical Race Theory and circuits of worth will be utilized, as well, when relevant. The concepts of threat rigidity and of loose coupling will be explained during a latter part of the analysis, but

the concepts of "institutional entrepreneurs" organized around a "social project" (Colomy, 1998) are critical for understanding the founding team members that sought approval through CPS's Renaissance 2010's RFP process and funding through the Gates Charter Compact for opening a charter school.

Isomorphism is commonly understood as the process by which "actions [over time become] consistent with those of other legitimate actors in the institutional environment" and non-isomorphism is understood as "actions that depart from what is considered legitimate in the institutional environment," (George, Chattopadhyay, Sitkin, & Barden, 2006, p.348). In this case study, the institutional environment is the neoliberal conditions within the Chicago Public School system and amongst other neoliberal (non-community organized) charter schools within CPS. There is not a perfect framing for talking about charter schools, neoliberal educational reforms are complex and often nuanced in their manifestations. They are diverse and can vary wildly in their origin stories and intents.

From the macro-level and exo-level analyses one might expect the charter school that is the focus of this study to align with neoliberal educational reforms and exemplify an emphasis on the following: achievement and test scores (the achievement tradition/paradigm); teacher performance pay/quantitative evaluative processes; punitive/deficit ideology aligning "no excuses" disciplinary policies; a college prep, "race neutral" curriculum with an emphasis on individualism and earning potential. Additionally, one might expect inexperienced and/or uncertified teachers and some kind of student enrollment model that might deny entry to students

with "undesirable" records or with special education needs. Many neoliberal, "no excuses" charter schools and charter networks in Chicago are criticized for all of these practices, yet, the charter school in the study proposed a vision that intended to actively resist many of those same neoliberal practices and orientations.[3] While it's funding and origins relied on philanthrocapitalist funding and the Request for Proposal (RFP) approval process for new charters established by the 2010 Renaissance program, the vision for the school could also be described as having non-isomorphic aspects, when compared to other charter schools, as well.

To safeguard educators who worked at the school, I will not be sharing the grades that it served specifically, but it did include two schools within its framework meant to be attended in succession (e.g., an elementary school and middle school or a middle school and high school). For this reason, one school will be referred to as the "older side" and the other school as the "younger side," because it is the clearest way to delineate between the age groups without disclosing the grades served by the school overall. The school was founded by a white woman who then recruited a leadership team that included a white and Mexican identifying woman and another white woman, all of them between the ages of 30 – 45 years of age. All three of them had entered into the profession via alternate teaching certification and teaching corps programs that were aligned with neoliberal reforms and the accountability movement.

[3] This study does not conceptualize charter schools as a monolith; they are not all alike, and this study fully acknowledges that fact. However, since the charter school in the study was well aligned with the conditions of neoliberal, urban austerity politics in Chicago, this study understands that the charter school is expected to perform on the accountability metrics and measures that are outlined for achievement by CPS.

Again, to safeguard research participants, any identifying information will be kept as general as possible, and general titles will be utilized for educators that are highlighted in the study.

4.1: Activating Circuits of Privilege and Accumulation

The School's Founding Team and Its Origin Story

School's Founder: …the Time Renaissance Schools Fund…it was out of the Civic Committee of Chicago. It supported what was, at that time, Arnie Duncan and Mayor Daley's, big initiative "Renaissance 2010" which was opening up new schools in Chicago. And…that was a public-private partnership…and we were kind of the private partner…and basically our role was, I mean the most fundamental thing we did was give startup grants to new schools. And it was largely charter schools, but it wasn't entirely charter schools. So we gave startup grants to those schools but then…the thing that I learned a lot more from, like, I did more on was, we partnered with Chicago Public Schools on the RFP process for selecting which schools were kind of ready to meet the bar to open…So schools that wanted to…teams that wanted to start [a school] had to write up a whole proposal and go through a whole process. Renaissance 2010 is now called New Schools for Chicago. We basically, we designed that process in many ways. We worked with the Office of New Schools, or [Office of] I [Innovation] and I [Incubation] at CPS, but really ran much of that RFP process…and we were like the most consistent piece of that process for three years. But through that…I really saw a lot about what kind of schools were coming up in this, in Chicago, and nationwide…I learned a lot of…what I think were good practices from them, but also saw a lot of limitations. And so I really felt like…I had a vision that was different than…what was being proposed. And I just kind of felt like well, I guess maybe I should do it. That's how it started.

The founder considered her interest in urban education to be a lifelong passion. Her undergraduate thesis for her American Studies major was on,

> School Founder: …desegregation efforts in different communities…as a community control issue…So basically I studied race in urban America and then focused on…a specific issue in education. But…right after school, I went into finance but knew that I wanted to work back in education. And then, after a couple of years, I did the [name of a teaching corps] program. And I knew that I didn't want to, teach forever…because I knew that wasn't really my strength within education…but I did want to work within the field of education, and I felt like having, the classroom experience was pretty central to that. So I taught seventh grade math…in my first, actually, in two different schools, just for two years…sixth, seventh, and eighth grade math in my first school…And then, my second year, so my second year…and I had really, really struggled my first year of teaching and I was excessed from that school, which then shut down like another year later…so then I taught in a second school that…largely served, pretty much, the same population of students…And I saw how much just having a different culture in that school made a huge difference. And that was a big lesson for me. Just, yeah, it was just a very different feel of the school and…it still struggled and was not like an all-star school, it was part of the small schools movement….it was actually one of those original ones…one of the earliest ones. So yeah…that was just a very good lesson around how basic cultures of schools can have a really big impact on students.

The school's founder (a white, middle-class female from out-of-state) decided to explore opening a charter school in Chicago while working with the Time Renaissance School Fund. She had first-hand knowledge of the Request for Proposals (RFP) processes and intimate knowledge about which RFP's were successful and why. The founder utilized her lifelong circuits of privilege to conceive of a social project that would align with her intentions for being of service within

urban education. After completing a joint master's degree program in business and policy and working for a couple of years with an alternate teaching certification program on its alumni side, she began working for the Time Renaissance Fund. Her undergraduate, early career, graduate program, and mid-career experiences were a mix of business/finance and educational sector programs. The teaching corps program she took part in was a collaboration between The New Teacher Project (TNTP) (founded by Michelle Rhee in 1997 with ongoing support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) and the state Department of Education where she taught ("The New Teacher Project," 2015). The teaching corps program she participated in is an example of a private-public venture funded by philanthrocapitalists. This study is not evaluating the effectiveness of such programs, this study is only asserting that the background of the founder of the charter school in this study had begun her professional trajectory in urban education through a private-public venture that is aligned with neoliberal education reform models, in this case an alternate teacher certification and teacher recruitment organization.[4]

The founder emphasized having a "lifelong passion for urban education." During the interview, she said this passion began when she was in sixth grade, when she first learned about inequities in educational experiences. Her micro-cultural experiences (her positioning, practices, choices, and perspectives) from sixth grade through to the founding of the school were well aligned with neoliberal school reform

[4] This study recognizes that educators can come from diverse backgrounds and have diverse routes into the profession. The researcher also came into the teaching profession through a private-public venture funded by philanthrocapitalists (Teach for America), and does not seek to pass judgement on the pathways that one chooses into the profession.

movements. The macro-contexts are steeped in the dominant educational narrative of "failing schools" with hard-to-serve students are a taken-for-granted way of understanding urban education and, more specifically, of understanding low-income students of color in the United States since ANAR and NCLB. The neoliberal context was a taken-for-granted assumption regarding the macro- and exo- level environments; these constituted the field of possibilities within all nested ecological systems by the time the founder was creating her school's RFP.

In this same interview, the founder remarked that many neighborhoods in Chicago were actively hostile towards charter schools and so, as a result, she and her colleagues ruled out many communities as possible school locations. It was important to her and her colleagues that the school be located in a community where residents would be receptive to a school-choice option like a charter school, but that the school would also serve a low-income, African American student population and, moreover, it was a community that needed a new school. During the team's outreach, they connected with community leaders in a low-income, African American neighborhood with an appropriate and available building for their school that was receptive. A lifelong resident of the community (albeit who had never worked in schools), soon joined the team as a member of their operations team.

The founder knew that charter schools are contentious in Chicago and that some communities "had been burned" by them in the past. However, her personal micro-cultural experiences and her background in business and finance meant that she was well aligned with neoliberal reform models and believed in her team's ability to

be successful despite the challenges that other public schools and charters had previously faced in communities with similar demographics. She believed she was uniquely positioned to bridge the two worlds.

> [I] …moved to [a large, urban city] after a couple of years of teaching to complete my graduate studies…to attend the [redacted university name] to do a joint degree in their business school and their policy school. So that was kind of…the intention was to bring together my experiences, again always within education…And then I really believed, like when I first started out at this time…I don't think…it's…I don't think there's this big of a movement now. Because I think people have recognized the limitations, but, at the time, there was just a huge push for bringing business skills into education. And…I felt like it was being done really poorly. I think there are things to learn from business, but you can't just, like, plop them down. You need to have…you wouldn't send, like, you wouldn't put a car CEO in charge of a tech company, right? Like it's not, yes - there's some transferable lessons and practices, but it really was…I thought it was missing a lot of the context and the nuance in education. I think it is a very…it's a very nuanced, complicated, complex field. And so…I kind of rode that, like, OK - bring in business education, but in a way that was more skeptical of it and believing that, like, you need…people who are going to do that with a lot more understanding of education and actually bridge those two worlds vs. just come in and helping them. So that was that was my rationale…

Perhaps most telling from her words above is the idea that "you wouldn't put a car CEO in charge of a tech company, right?" The school's founder clearly saw herself as an educational reformer and not an MBA coming in to run a school. Her experiences in the classroom and working in peripheral private-public venture organizations (alternate certification programs and the Time Renaissance School Fund) allowed her to position herself as qualified for the role of founding a charter school given the prevalence of neoliberal logics within both the macro- and exo-levels. She constructed a reality where having worked within a school for two years as a teacher qualified her to lead a school because of her additional education (her joint MBA and

policy degree) and her peripheral experiences within the field of education. She openly spoke throughout her interviews as understanding herself as lacking instructional expertise but concluded that her finance and business knowledges were assets to the founding leadership team. She believed that recruiting and hiring school leaders with the instructional and pedagogical skills she was lacking would suffice for organizational management at the school.

The founder and her team organized their social project through the lens of institutional entrepreneurship (Colomy, 1998). Philanthrocapitalist funding and private-public oversight of the Renaissance 2010 and New Schools for Chicago RFP process provided a field of possibilities for their team to engage with the educational marketplace as a charter school "start-up" team, focused on "innovation" and providing school choice for an underserved African American community in the city of Chicago. The instructional and school culture leaders she recruited to open the school with had also entered the field of education through neoliberal aligning, alternate certification programs. The founding team were all beneficiaries of neoliberal circuits of privilege that would be awarded a school charter intended to confront and resist white supremacy by bridging the business and education worlds within their school. This makes sense given the "race neutrality," or meritocracy, of the market; the idea being that students from doubly-segregated communities just need to have more exposure to business logics earlier on so that they can compete. With CPS actively seeking to phase out and close so many neighborhood schools as part of their Renaissance 2010 reforms, the field of possibilities for working within

schools in Chicago was narrowing and the school reformers in this study were aptly positioned to fill this "void." The school's founding team would accumulate both positions of power/authority and new identities/titles through their neoliberal alignments. CRT's concept of interest convergence appears natural in this case. The field of possibilities is for potential charter school leaders to submit RFPs, and in the process, they secure positions that they would not be qualified for within a fully public system. As institutional entrepreneurs, however, they are considered innovators within the field of educational reforms.

One of the central findings from the micro-level manifestations of neoliberal circuits of worth in this study is that where there is neoliberal accumulation, there is also dispossession. Public school teachers and educators, who had taken years to acquire certifications and degrees to do so and who had dedicated their professional lives to teaching, were losing their jobs with each school closing (Ewing, 2018; Lipman, 2011); public school divestment was also public-school educator divestment as charter schools have long been viewed as an assault on the profession of teaching and on teacher unions. The vision of the school, both from its origins to years later when data was collected, can help to illuminate many of the contradictions and paradoxes that these charter school social entrepreneurs faced as they tried to bridge the business world with the world of neoliberal education reforms. As the school's founders activated their circuits of privilege via their alignment with neoliberal logics, circuits of dispossession were being simultaneously activated. Circuits of privilege and dispossession are complex in the field of neoliberal educational reforms,

however, and the institutional entrepreneurs in this case study found that, ultimately, the macro- and exo- level conditions dictated the micro-level manifestations of circuits of worth.

The charter's founder and founding team were well aligned with the concept of "institutional entrepreneurs" (Colomy, 1998). Colomy (1998) borrows the term from Eisenstadt, "Eisenstadt uses the term institutional entrepreneurs to designate those individuals and groups who adopt leadership roles in episodes of institution building," (p.270). The neoliberal reform movement in education is an institution building project that is meant to increasingly privatize the field of education into new school choice markets, based upon austerity politics. This was certainly true in Chicago as CPS and the Corporate Club sought to shut down "failing" public, neighborhood schools in order to incentivize and expand school choice options that would utilize philanthrocapitalist funding to build new institutions with private-public venture models. "Eisenstadt maintains that institutional change and the specific directions is takes are partially contingent on the activities of particular entrepreneurial groups. These groups crystallize broad symbolic orientations in new ways, articulate specific goals, and construct novel normative, cognitive, and organizational frameworks to achieve them," (Colomy, 1998, p. 271). The founding team, saw themselves as social, institutional entrepreneurs and organized themselves around a "project:" the opening of what they believed would be an innovative charter school. "The creative role of institutional entrepreneurs is organized around a project…the formation of an innovative project and the attempt to institutionalize it

carve free space between entrepreneurs' actions and the macro environments in which they are pursued," (Colomy, 1998, p.271). In this case, the macro-level, neoliberal reform model claims to be "innovative" even when the reforms in each new charter/institution may have been tried within the field of education previously. The "innovation" is typically the private-public funding venture, not the teaching and learning reforms that will be implemented. In this way, neoliberal educational reforms at the macro- and exo-levels can approve projects and recruit social, institutional entrepreneurs that are just reconfiguring concepts of teaching and learning that have been around for years or even decades previously (such as a distributive/shared leadership model, a small schools model, project-based learning, a 1:1 technology program, and educating the "whole child"). Even within the institutional environment of CPS and Renaissance 2010, the proposed models for teaching and learning were not particularly innovative; the charter proposal was "innovative" solely because of the private-public funding sources (divestment as interest convergence) and its concurrent intentions to be non-isomorphic to other neoliberal charter networks aligned with "no excuses" models.

In this way the institutional entrepreneurs are first "…constrained, in a formal way, to articulate their project in terms of instrumental and moral-symbolic frames that resonate with potential supporters' typifications and recipes. Second…few challenge every recognizable feature of an existing social order. Implicitly or explicitly, a project constitutes, phenomenologically, some macro environments that it treats as unchangeable," (Colomy, 1998, p. 273). The founding team believed

neoliberalism to be an unchangeable macro-level environment within the exo-level context of the Chicago Public School system. Their proposal to CPS's Office of Innovation and Incubation typified the funding model that gained approval for new charter schools. It is for this reason that the study of "…institutional projects…must attend to not only what entrepreneurs explicitly seek to change…but also to its taken-for-granted assumptions about the macro environment," (Colomy, 1998, p. 273). The institutional entrepreneurs in this study were not "race neutral" reformers, yet their taken for granted assumptions about the unchangeable nature of school choice reforms (similar to the idea that "there is no alternative" within neoliberalism and austerity politics) aligned their project with neoliberal ideologies that eventually would cause the school to fail and close. Once the "innovative" private-public funding model proved unsustainable and the school based, per-pupil funding did not provide adequate resources to sustain the school due to declining enrollment, it becomes clear that historical circuits of dispossession had found "innovative" new ways to disguise themselves at the expense of low-income, students of color and the educators working to provide school choice options within neoliberal constraints.

The analytical process for this study is complex in that it seeks to do a systemic level of analysis through a micro-cultural setting, but also fundamentally sees the macro- and exo-level realities as setting up the possible conditions for individuals (in this case, social entrepreneurs) to act within. In other words, this study necessitates exploring the roles of individuals who founded the school when they were the social entrepreneurs that leveraged circuits of privilege to create the

school. It is fundamental to the origin story of the school and to how neoliberal circuits of privilege/accumulation are operationalized (while simultaneously (re)creating circuits of dispossession for differently situated others), in this case within a low-income, Black community. It was not the intention of the school's founders to recreate circuits of dispossession and this study does not place blame within individuals for being allowed to do so within our current neoliberal episteme; the fault lies with the system. This study does not seek to shame or blame individuals, but seeks to demonstrate why individuals within education need to prioritize learning about ideological alignments prior to gaining positions of power within the field of education when the field itself is aligned with America's neoliberal episteme. The educators and administrators within this study all lost a school that meant the world to them too. They experienced the trauma of failure, the loss of their micro-cultural community, and then the complex-trauma of having contributed to circuits of dispossession. The system failed the educators by setting them up for failing their students. This is not an equal dispossession to the ones that their students and families endured. However, the point is that educators are also being dispossessed through neoliberal school reform policies as the communities they intend to serve are simultaneously enduring the inter-generational traumas of institutionalized, dysconscious racism.

4.2: Circuits of Accumulation and Dispossession

Apple's (2001) concept of the "professional and managerial new middle class" and Critical Race Theory's tenet of interest convergence (the founder's desire

to bridge her business and urban education backgrounds) help to explain how the founder's micro-cultural experiences and positioning allowed her to activate circuits of privilege within a neoliberal reform context to accumulate a charter school. The founder's inside knowledge of RFP practices allowed her to make choices based on her perspectives that justified her "qualifications" for uniquely bridging the worlds of business and education. She (and her team) believed they would be able to do so in way that reflected the "nuanced, complicated, and complex field" of urban education to better serve hard to serve students with their "innovative" charter.

The year when data collection took place (the school's fifth year of operation) was particularly tumultuous for the charter school. Two of the founding instructional leaders had decided to leave at the end of the previous academic year (the school's fourth year of operation) and the school was attempting to restructure during its fifth year. As many charter schools do, the school started with one class of students and expanded each year as it scaled up to its proposed, size. This meant that two new school leaders were brought in, and these new leaders would both serve as School Directors for their designated grades and their "school" within the school. One School Director served the "younger side" of the building, and another would serve the students and teachers on the "older side" of the building.

However, this transition did not go very smoothly. One School Director decided to leave in November and the other experienced a critical incident in January and remained on the payroll but did not serve in her full leadership capacity after that event. By February of the year when data collection was taking place, the original

founder was the sole member of the administrative leadership team attempting to keep the school functioning. Having previously only worked on the operations and budgeting sides of the charter school, with the other two school leaders handling instruction and school culture, she was overwhelmed. Since I was not able to complete end-of-the-year interviews with the two School Directors who left mid-year, one of the former, founding instructional school leaders volunteered to provide additional insights into the school's context and culture leading up to the year of data collection. This opportunity allowed for seeing how the school's intentions and "innovations" fared and changed overtime to understand how the founder became the only school leader by the end of the year when data was collected, the fifth year of the school's operation. In addition to leadership departures, the school also faced nearly a third of its staff leaving (for a wide variety of reasons from new opportunities to sick leave to firings) which many teachers felt weakened the school's sense of community and culture.

The Founding, "Non-Isomorphic" Intentions

In many ways, despite being aligned with neoliberal educational reforms and philanthrocapitalist/private-public venture funding, the school intentions were to confront white supremacy and focus on the "whole child." The school was not narrowly focused on paradigms aligned with the achievement tradition/conservative modernization of neoliberal school reforms (e.g, they sought to implement restorative justice practices, hoping to avoid "rigid discipline" that "doesn't work for most kids"). In other words, even as a school that was manifested from the conditions

provided by neoliberal reform movements, the school sought to be non-isomorphic to the achievement tradition and to neoliberal reform movement practices that typify other "no excuses" neoliberal aligning charter schools. In doubly-segregated school contexts, many neoliberal reforms are seen as "race neutral," yet the founding school leadership team had no intention of being "race neutral" in their day-to-day administrative practices.

As an example, they intended to hire expert teachers (those having taught around 10 years) and pair them with someone who had just begun teaching. This would have the effect of reducing workload so that planning times could be maximized and cooperative teaching could be utilized during instructional minutes with students. One of the founding leaders shared, that they wanted to…

> …develop teams of teachers that could work together in a way that we weren't seeing happening in schools…what if you looked at it differently, where teachers who had greater skill and experience levels could have a greater impact on the school.

The founding team wanted to set up conditions at the school so that a distributed leadership culture could be established. While this is not necessarily groundbreaking, the lack of hierarchy and distributed leadership model was meant to improve working conditions for teachers. This meant that expert teachers would have great deal of autonomy over their work, flexibility regarding their schedules and student groupings, all while still engaging with a high-level support from the founding leadership team. As another example, the team's founding vision for their hiring practices was to directly hire qualified staff, faculty, and leaders that reflected the students at the school and that had grown up in the surrounding neighborhoods and communities as

much as they possibly could. The school also made explicit efforts to hire Black teachers and more teachers and leaders of color than they had observed at other charter schools around Chicago.

The year the study took place, the distributed leadership model was no longer sustainable, however. As the school had scaled up, they found it challenging to consistently retain and hire expert teachers. While they did have the ability to offer competitive pay to expert teachers, they were most often only able to recruit teachers with less experience (0 – 5 years as opposed to 7 -10 years). One of the initial, non-isomorphic intents had to be abandoned, but they remained true to their vision of hiring educators that had grown up in the surrounding community and to hiring educators of color. This extended to the two incoming school leaders for the year when the study took place. Both new School Directors had grown up in the surrounding community and were Black, females with previous years of school leadership experience within CPS schools (one within charters and the other within both traditional and charter schools). One of them had transitioned into education from a career in finance, but entered the profession via a traditional, university certification program and the other had gained her experience from a similar, alternate teaching corps program as the school's founding team members. Additionally, many of the teachers (4 of 7 total) who were research participants in the study had direct ties to the surrounding neighborhood and communities. In this way, the school remained committed to finding talent that was reflective of the community

and the students that it was serving. This can be an anomaly for charter school hiring practices, especially for school leadership positions.

Circuits of Dispossession

4.3: School Climate and Culture Explored

This study utilizes and understands the concept of school culture to include shared beliefs (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Schoen & Teddie, 2008) that are comprised of "Unwritten rules and traditions, norms, and expectations that permeate everything: the way people act, how they dress, what they talk about, whether they seek out colleagues for help or don't, and how teachers feel about their work and their students," (Deal & Peterson, 1999, pp. 2-3). Additionally, it is commonly accepted that school leaders can shape school culture (Harris, 2018). In other words, school culture can be described as the way in which the educators within the school see their school and their roles within the school (Hargreaves, 1994). Positive school climate, as defined by Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Alessandro (2013) includes safety (including rules and norms), relationships, teaching and learning, the institutional environment, and school improvement processes. Often, school culture and school climate are conflated (Schoen & Teddie, 2008), however, for the purposes of this study, school climate is understood as the formal concepts and ideas that are promoted for an efficacious school environment and school culture is the lived experiences and informal beliefs about the environment that develop and are experienced naturally. School climate could conceivably be captured in quantitative and qualitative metrics while school culture would require a decidedly qualitative focus. In the case of the

school within the study, neither the school climate nor the school culture would be considered healthy and functioning. By taking a closer look at the teaching and learning, safety, and relationships that the teachers lived as experiences for the year of data collection, we can begin to illuminate how one neoliberal charter school approached school climate impacted the lived experiences of teachers working within its walls.[5] How do circuits of worth function at micro-level based on the school climate and culture of a neoliberal charter school?

Teaching and Learning, and Dispossession

Teacher:	If there is a new teacher, it's our job to train them, sort of...it falls on us to be like, "Here's how [the online curriculum] works, and here's...The Admin is not...
Researcher: of the year?	There's no onboarding process for new teachers in the middle
Teacher:	In an academic sense…There isn't...So [the name of substitute teacher] was like..."I need to get a [curriculum program] log in." And I was like, "Nobody got you a log in?...You've been here for three weeks. I'll sit down with you, and I'll show you how this works." But what it means is that...we're having to do the training of new people. And if we don't do it, it doesn't happen. Which makes classes worse for all of us and for kids…and it's just like... It's one of those... It's another thing to beat you down. [chuckle] It's one more factor in the exhaustion.
Teacher:	The things that need to be talked about are honest conversations about why certain things and certain structures

[5] The school climate dimensions of the institutional environment and school improvement processes will not be analyzed in depth. The institutional environment would require student data and is therefore outside the scope of this study. School improvement processes were not able to be observed because the school was struggling with the climate dimensions of safety, relationships, and teaching and learning.

don't work. There was one PD right before [the school director's name] left, where she was like, "I've been really thinking about it, and I think that [the online curriculum] is bad for our kids." And I'm like, "Okay, this is a conversation that we should be having and should have already had.

Teacher: [Name of school director] told me in January, she said, "Screw [the online curriculum], we need to teach a book and we need to say, "Forget what [the online curriculum] is going to ask for at the end." You can go in and augment that." That was one of the biggest mistakes [the name of the curriculum coach], who was our [curriculum] lead, she did not understand how that platform needed to be used in the school. Is it fine if you wanna call it a learning management system? Yeah. To use it as your sole curriculum guide?...It's idiotic. The people at [the philanthropic online curriculum program] should frankly be ashamed that they're peddling it to schools that it's not gonna succeed in.

School Founder: I mean this was...We've had many…every year has been very difficult. But this is by far the worst, and I think….I don't know…I'm like feeling. I mean, I think I feel almost like every year I've finished not very happy, exhausted, and maybe defeated. But I do think this is the first year where I feel like we definitely went backwards significantly.

Teaching and learning at the school, for the academic year of data collection, were dominated by the online curriculum that the school had chosen. The fully online curriculum the school adopted is a neoliberal project that is a "free" product offered to schools. Originally developed by teachers, the platform gained large-scale funding (over $142 million dollars) from the a large, philanthropic technology organization after they toured a charter school in California that developed the

curriculum. The school had also originally opened with a one-to-one technology grant (one device for each student) from Next Generation Learning Challenges Initiative (NGLC). NGLC is funded by philanthrocapitalist foundations (the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundations, the Chan-Zuckerberg Initiative, the Broad Foundation, etc.) that are consistent with neoliberal reform ideas. Philanthrocapitalists "provide" schools with resources for "free," but in reality, it is an example of interest convergence operating as there is little oversight into the efficacy of this online curriculum or data security practices for students' data.

It's important to note that the grants given to the school for opening did not provide ongoing funding. They were one-time grants to get the charter school started (similar to start-up funding in Silicon Valley) and then the school was to utilize per-pupil, school-based funding from CPS and ongoing fundraising/donations to sustain themselves and the donated technologies. This funding dynamic would prove to be disastrous for the school, however, (creating a circuit of dispossession) when student enrollment waned. In other words, the charter school in the study experienced the same declining enrollment that neighborhood CPS schools had experienced during the Renaissance 2010 closing when the location where they were located became over saturated with new charters and had a long-standing, comprehensive high school within its community that could offer extensive extra-curricular activities, sports, and clubs.

The online learning curriculum and learning platform was adopted by the school after their initial distributed leadership model proved unsustainable. The

charter school had originally intended for expert teachers to be able to have a great deal of autonomy with their curriculum (within the parameters set out by the Common Core curriculum). However, when their intended model for hiring expert teachers could not be sustained through teacher hiring, they needed to find a solution to support newer and less experienced teachers. The realities of their hiring practices required a baseline of support and structure for teacher instruction and the free, online learning platform would meet both needs.

Teachers had varying degrees of efficacy with the program. The cognitive skills, power focus areas, project checkpoints, and assessments did not always align with the methods that teachers believed would be best for their students. Across all teacher cases, they all believed that a major shortcoming of the learning program was in providing remediation. The online learning program assumed students had background knowledge and previous skills that most students did not have or, at least, some students needed to have their prior knowledge activated in order to connect with new material. Additionally, one teacher utilized the curriculum in a manner that was more reminiscent of a "teacher-proof" curriculum and did little to adjust or modify the lessons ahead of time for the needs of their student. The majority of the teachers in the study (6 of 7) did spend time to thoughtfully modify, supplement, and differentiate additional content based on the curriculum for their specific students, but there was little to no guidance from instructional leaders to do so. They did so as professionals that had high personal regard for the learning and growth of their

students. But not because the school or its instructional leaders provided professional development supports to determine when, how, and if a teacher should.

Teachers were doing their best to guide other teachers and to support incoming, long-term substitutes who were assigned to the school, but the school leadership did not address the academic and curricular needs of teachers. Teachers who were struggling with the program themselves were having to train the incoming long-term substitutes on how the learning platform's components worked. Five of seven of the teachers did not believe the online learning curriculum was the appropriate for their students and none of them would have wanted children of their own to utilize it in their own classrooms.

The online learning platform claims to have a rigorous application and enrollment process that ensures success with the platform, but very little ongoing oversight was observed. After two years of data from students, a close partnership should have triggered that this charter school was struggling with the program's implementation. Their student achievement data, which the online platform required schools to share with them and is available on CPS's website for whole school metrics (6^{th} percentile for math, and 27^{th} percentile for reading – both considered low scores), did not seem to be problematic for continuing with a curriculum that was clearly not meeting the needs of students after its second year of implementation. The greatest weakness of the curriculum, again acknowledged across all teachers and by one of the school leaders, was that the majority of students simply could not access the material. (An additional discussion of the lack of teacher professional

development will follow in the discussion on reciprocal relations between the nested ecological levels.) Professional development sessions were not able to fill this "void" as the new school Directors were unfamiliar with the curriculum and because the school was stuck in a "vicious cycle" when it came to vital aspects of school climate and culture. The result was a dispossession of teacher professional development that impacted day-to-day instructional practices with their students.

Safety, and Dispossession

Teacher:	I think, currently right now...the school is operating, from my observation, as in survival mode. When I say survival mode, when people are surviving they're usually just reacting. It's not... A lot of things aren't being well thought out in advance. I think people are just... Whatever is happening at the time that's what you deal with. You only deal with what's right in front you and I think that's how the school is operating... A lot of our meetings are about things that are...reactionary.

Teacher:	I've witnessed 13 people leave and I know half of the reasons why half of them left, you know what I mean? And to look at the issues that we know...
Researcher:	What would you say were the reasons half of them left?
Teacher:	Structure, accountability, students being able to…to run freely. Safety. I know a couple of people left for safety.
Researcher:	Basic safety?
Teacher:	Basic safety.

Based upon collected field notes from the initial professional development days, the school sought to create a "structured, restorative culture." A two-page handout on the culture vision of the school was distributed and stated,

> School culture should not simply enable learning but should be wholly consistent with what types of learners we aim to develop: scholars that become innovators, entrepreneurs, and community change-agents. Scholars who own their learning, unlock their potential, live compassionately and create a better community. School culture drives the fundamental lessons and messages we teach students – if we want our students to be questioners, innovators, critical thinkers, and disciplined self-starters, we must encourage critical engagement not only with texts and in classroom discussions but with the immediate world around them. Restorative practices, attention to socio-emotional learning, and opportunities for leadership and voice in the school community all support the development of leaders, innovators, and change-agents, in a way that order, through a focus on compliance, authority, and only traditional disciplinary consequences do not.
>
> We utilize a "warm/strict" approach with students. This means we care deeply about our kids and recognize their obstacles, while simultaneously holding them to high expectations. We believe in the power of strong relationships and building a community where students feel safe, cared for, and listened to, but also feel challenged and held to their highest potential. We believe in preparing our students for college and life by equipping them with critical thinking skills, not be treating them like robots or lowering expectations.

Benefits of their approach should have provided: a safe, calm, and predictable environment; consistency among all adults and in all settings; a gain of instructional minutes; would hold students accountable in a way that produces real change to behaviors; and engaged families would have a positive effect on the school environment. Additional principles of the school's approach were included on the back of the handout with ideas and suggestions for handling challenging student behaviors or frustrations.

Stated school year goals for discipline were a 50% reduction on the "older side" in-school suspension (ISS) rates, a 25% reduction of ISS on the "younger side" rates and reducing out-of-school suspensions (OSS) as much as possible. Formal changes to federal, state, and district laws/policies were demanding that schools utilize both ISS and OSS far less when disciplining students as a means to moving away from zero-tolerance and exclusionary approaches of student discipline. The stated safety goals were to increase both students' and teachers' perceptions of having a school with a supportive environment and to improve the school's safety rating as measured by the "5 Essentials Survey."[6] Data from the previous years of the study had shown that their ratings (as measured by student respondents) for a supportive environment were rated as "neutral" with safety rated as "very weak." A supportive environment included metrics on peer support for academic work, academic personalism, safety, and student-teacher trust. Safety was rated as a "3" on a 100-point scale for the year prior to the study and as an "18" for the year when data was collected. Both scores are within the "very weak" rating, however it does suggest that students felt a bit safer during the year when data was collected than they had in previous years at the school. Observational and teacher interview data were consistent with the low safety ratings from the 5Essentials survey.

When thinking about the efficacy of neoliberal reforms and the data that is collected for Chicago Public School system oversight, "very weak" rating for safety

[6] The 5Essentials Survey is utilized to predict school improvement. Students, families, and educators at the school take the survey each year. Researchers at the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research developed the survey to measure 5Essentials, which includes a "supportive environment." Safety is measures as a component of a supportive environment.

seems like it should trigger additional oversight from the district. However, because the entire charter and school choice models are neoliberal institutional projects that are meant to divest in public education, CPS simply does not intervene in the daily practices of charter schools even when the metrics suggest that a school is facing deep and persistent struggles with school safety measures. It simply is the problem of the charter school even though the students within the charter school are still CPS students.

Critical incidents involving violence at the school took place throughout the school year. Disciplinary issues and school policies around student disciplinary issues took up significant portions of professional development sessions throughout the year. The school had hired a full-time security guard (which rotated between two school resource officers) from an outside organization during a previous year of operation and the school resource officers remained at the school throughout the year when data was collected. In addition to security, the school did have a socio-emotional learning partnership with an outside organization. The organization provided a full-time staff member who worked on-site at the school to implement restorative justice practices and to train staff on socio-emotional learning. Additionally, the school had a full-time social worker on-site too.

It is outside the scope of this study to evaluate why the safety issues may have been occurring, but the observations and interview data collected do reflect a lack of student and educator safety within the school. This may contribute to why the school also faced a high amount of teacher turnover. On the "younger side" of the school,

only one teacher left mid-year. However, on the "older side" twelve staff members chose to leave mid-year. In addition to basic safety concerns, consistency regarding school policies around demerits, detentions, in-school suspensions (ISS), out-of-school suspension (OSS), cell phones, student behaviors during passing periods, and procedures for students when they left class (bathroom, computer issues, going to school offices) were persistently missing. Teachers across all cases on both sides of the school expressed frustration with unpredictability and inconsistency when the disciplinary team was reacting to student behaviors. Teachers did not feel that students were being held accountable for their actions, that the school environment was structured for student success, or that the school provided a predictable and consistent response across adults as per the stated school climate norms. Safety impacted the ability of the school to provide a consistent and supportive environment for both educators and students and very quickly had a negative impact on school culture.

The school's culture regarding safety, the unstated norms and beliefs about safety within the school, did not match the formal, stated norms or goals for providing a safe, learning environment. There were differences between the two sides of the school with the younger side experiencing less concerns about their safety and well-being. Teachers on the younger side continually commented that the school "felt like a family" and felt that their school culture was far more positive than the "older side" of the building. However, all teachers felt that the way that disciplinary issues were handled by leadership did not hold students accountable. All teacher participants

expressed frustrations with changing school policies around ISS and OSS. While research and federal and state policy had hoped to curb exclusionary discipline, doing so without providing schools and educators with workable alternatives and/or the professional development on effective, new approaches was perceived to be lacking. The restorative practitioner in the building did provide some professional development around de-escalating techniques and how to have a peace circle, but teachers did not perceive this as sufficient for addressing and holding students accountable for negative behaviors.

Relationships, and Dispossession

Teacher: The thing I say all the time, and at this point I'll say it to anyone except to her face yet, is that when you have only taken away bad business tactics from your MBA program... And that's all that these are, the tactic of, "I'm going to try and keep you at bay." It's like, "Oh yeah, I hear that that's a problem, I'm working on it. I'm gonna keep you at bay." Or, "Oh, you have that problem? I'm gonna pass you onto someone else." And then never sits down and listens to what our realities are.

Researcher: How do you feel about MBA logics and tactics being applied in an educational setting?

Teacher: It is a dangerous thing when done without being paired with a sense of knowing what is right in a school…knowing that relationships ultimately rule all, and knowing that this isn't a business as much as you wanna think it is. This is about teaching kids.

Teacher: I think classroom management style is usually predicated off of the supports you have. So at this school...well, I'll say this, my classroom management style in this school, with the parameters we have at this school, is 100% relationship-based. Meaning, I've developed a certain level of relationships with students where they are in compliance because of that

> relationship…and these same exact students may not operate the same way they operate with me in another [teacher's] classroom.

Relationships and relational trust are vital to the establishment of a healthy school climate and for perceptions of a healthy school culture. "The process of teaching and learning is fundamentally relational," (Thapa et al., 2013, p. 363). This study did not focus on the relationships and relational trust between educators and students in the building, only on the adult relationships between teachers and between teachers and leadership. "Relational trust depends on what behaviors people observe and whether these behaviors are interpreted as appropriate. The normative criteria for discerning appropriate behaviors are respect, competence, personal regard (care) for others, and integrity," (Rhodes, Stevens, & Hemmings, 2011, p.83).

The stated school climate norms and values for relationships were focused on teambuilding and being able to have crucial conversations. During the summer professional development session, the professional development activities around being a team (utilized as a proxy for relationships) involved excerpts from Patrick Lencioni's "The Five Dysfunctions of a Team" and a related self-assessment tool regarding being a team player. The five dysfunctions included: an absence of trust, a fear of conflict, a lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability, and an inattention to results (Summary.com, 2009). The questions to think about in the session asked teachers to consider how they had contributed to the dysfunction of a previous team? And what are you going to hold yourself accountable for doing to make this team function?

The only stated school climate values that aligned with workplace relationships was a section that claimed that the school sought to be,

> An inspiring workplace that values respect and healthy skepticism: We believe a truly exceptional organization treats its people well, inspiring their best work and dedication. We value diverse and healthy skepticism, treating all those engaged in this work with respect and thoughtful consideration within exempting anyone's work or perspective from rigorous questioning.

But again, relationships went explicitly unmentioned, they were only assumed under the idea of a "workplace" and a "team." The stated norms for how to relate with one another were to question one another and to engage in "crucial conversations."

The second day of full staff professional development in the summer included a framework for engaging in crucial conversations with one another. The leadership team stressed that it needed to be safe to have crucial conversations with one another, whether they be between teachers, with leadership, and/or with students. Crucial conversations were understood as conversations that involved opposing opinions, strong emotions, and high stakes. There was a stated norm that staff and teachers should push both one another (and their students) towards growth by having crucial conversations when necessary.

Both the frameworks for crucial conversations and the dysfunctions of a team seemed to cast relationships as potentially contentious. Relational trust being based upon respect, competence, personal regard for others, and integrity, went unmentioned. There was a formal assumption that working on a team involved relationships, but there were no explicit norms or values around the social relationships between teachers or the social relationships that teachers should expect

with their leadership team. The leadership team made it clear that they wanted to be thought of as accessible and open to critique, but the expectations for social dynamics on the team were expressed via dysfunctions and how to have difficult conversations when conflict occurred. I think this is an important oversight as researchers have "…found evidence that schools with high relational trust, such as good social relationships among members of the school community, are more likely to make changes that improve student achievement," (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, as quoted in Thapa et al., 2013). Without explicit mention of school-wide expectations for staff relationships and examples of positive interactions between team members, the leadership team inadvertently cast relationships as confrontational and based upon dynamics of dysfunction.

The unstated norms and beliefs around relationships within the school's culture were often based upon hierarchy. Teachers tended to be peers and utilized one another for coping within the school's climate and culture during an unpredictable and inconsistent year. The leadership team was not viewed as competent or effective at leading the school or staff. Teachers across cases believed that the school's founder was committed and caring. However, she had been very open about the division of labor on the leadership team and made it clear that instructional leadership was not her responsibility. This created major issues for teachers when both instructional School Directors that were new to the school that year abandoned their instructional roles. The founder was regarded as unable to lead instructionally across all teacher cases in the study.

Across all cases teachers also believed that they needed to rely upon relational trust built between them and their students to have a functioning classroom but had very little relational trust with the school's leaders. Between leaders on the leadership team, relational trust was weak at the beginning of the year and was entirely eroded by the end of the year. At the beginning of the year, the lack of understanding around the role and responsibilities of each incoming Director created tension. For the older side's Director, she opted to abandon her role completely by November. For the younger side's Director, the relational trust between her and the founder was irrevocably damaged by a critical incident that occurred between the new Director and a student. The founder wanted to understand why a student had been allowed to be arrested at the school and was unable to have a "crucial conversation" to gain insights into why this critical incident had happened in the way that it did. The founder was frustrated by this and any remaining relational trust that had existed between the two school leaders was gone when the crucial conversation proved impossible to have.

Micro-level Manifestations of Circuits of Dispossession

The micro-level manifestations of circuits of worth are important to reflect upon because they demonstrate the connections and interactivity that exist between the ecologically nested levels of our systems and structures. When the moving substrate feeds macro- and exo- levels of the system, and the meso-level interactivity with the micro-level of the systems are mirroring larger systems, then neoliberal accumulation (in the form of increasing privatization and expanding markets) means

that simultaneous divestment in public accountability for public services occurs. In the case of schooling, exo-level systems (CPS as a school district) can dispossess micro-level responsibilities and expenses (inclusive of accountability for the efficacy and sustainability of schools within their exo-level system). Students, families, and communities where this divestment occurs are left without adequate, nor equitable, experiences when compared with communities where circuits of privilege are activated.

The school's founders and the teachers who were able to accumulate professional experiences as administrators and teachers without the state certifications that are required in CPS's district schools are ultimately dispossessed by the system that created their accumulation, as well. This may or may not disrupt their position as members of the new professional and managerial new middle class. Their professional experience and roles may transfer to other charter schools or to non-profit organizations that serve schools, however, their new identities as administrators or as teachers may not be able to be replicated in future experiences without state certifications and educational requirements being met.

Chapter Five: Findings - An Ecological Analysis of Reciprocal Relations

5.1: Neo-Institutionalism Theories Applied

The school's explicitly articulated climate goals and visions, both from the school's inception and during the year of data collection, were not reflected in the unstated school culture and educators' ways of being during the year of data collection. Several neo-institutional theories from the field of organizational management can help to contextualize and explain why educators in this charter school experienced their school's climate as one that was continually degrading. Over time, the charter school in this study began to experience threat rigidity and this caused the school to alter their non-isomorphic reform ideas into practices that were much more in line with typical, isomorphic neoliberal charter schools. The increasingly loose coupling that teachers and staff experienced was a result of a founding school leader with no instructional expertise. This was also reflective of the intentional meso-level loose coupling between CPS (exo-level) and the charter school (micro-level) in the study.

During the year of data collection, the school's founder was in an increasingly unsustainable role. In fact, the school closed one year after these dissertation data were collected. This means that the capacity of the stand-alone charter school (a charter with minimal CPS/district oversight and no supporting network by design) to meet the needs of students, families, and teachers in this study was minimal to failing, yet CPS was not the authority that shut the school down. The school's own board

members voted to close the school due to budgetary reasons. Students who started during the first year of the school's operation in the lowest grade would be the only class that ever graduated from the school during the school's last year of operation. Any students who came in after that first year would have experienced their school failing and closing before they could complete their K-12 experience, effectively being dispossessed by their school. CPS's district-wide innovation of school choice models needs to be thoroughly examined as circuits of worth are activated through private-public ventures and are disproportionately dispossessing low-income students of color from accessing equitable educational experiences.

Loose Coupling within the Organization and Social Constructions of Reality

The charter school in the study for the year of data collection was a loosely coupled organization on several levels: the leadership team itself, the leadership team to the teaching teams, and teachers' classrooms to the larger school context. According to Weick (1976), who applied organizational theories to education, the idea of schools as "loosely coupled" organizations can take a variety of situations into mind. For the purposes of this study, the situations detailed in his analysis that align with situations at the charter school were the following:

> …(4) a relative lack of coordination, slow coordination or coordination that is dampened as it moves through a system; (5) a relative absence of regulations;…(9) infrequent inspection of activities within the system; (10) decentralization;…(12) and the absence of linkages that should be present based on some theory – for example, in educational organizations the expected feedback linkage from outcome back to inputs is often nonexistent…(Weick, 1976, p. 5).

The loss of leadership (both school directors), the instructional lead (the curriculum platform's lead), and disciplinary team members directly contributed to an unintended distributed leadership situation that resulted in the school having an extremely loose coupling between all organizational levels. This directly reflected the loose coupling and intentional lack of ongoing support from macro- and exo-level systems, as well.

Classroom teachers did not have a centralized support system for instructional matters or for student behavior interventions. The decentralization of decision making often led to confusion and to teachers constructing their own realities to cope with the lack of support that took the form of infrequent and/or nonexistent classroom observations, a lack of consistent school-wide regulations for managing student misbehaviors, and slow or infrequent reflection about what school policy changes would best serve students and classroom teachers. The teacher experiences with leadership, instructional, and disciplinary team members were so loosely coupled that nearly all the teachers (6 of 7) claimed to be "a single-cell classroom," "a one-man show," "entirely on my own," or "an island." When coping with student behaviors, this meant that teachers constructed a reality where their relationships with their students had to become more tightly coupled than their adherence to inconsistent and unpredictable school policy enforcement. In other words, the loose coupling of the organizational levels of the school required teachers to become more tightly coupled and reliant upon the quality of their relationships with students above all other possible organizational levels. This led to further inconsistencies and unpredictability though as each teacher had divergent and often differing ways of managing students

within their classrooms. Instructionally, teachers also took very divergent routes to coping and creating a reality of being successful with their students that year.

Teachers seek to understand their academic year and the achievement of their students in positive ways; having a "sense of success" with students it vital for teacher job satisfaction (Johnson and Birkeland, 2003). As the year progressed, most teachers (5 of 7) slowly abandoned the online curriculum and augmented the outcomes to "fit" the platform's assessment designs when teaching units that were not included in the online curriculum. They did this so they could better reach their students with content more appropriate to their students' abilities and/or to teach units that students would find to be of high interest. The teachers who took this approach felt that high interest units were one way that they could instructionally deal with classroom management issues without needing support from school disciplinary teams, which they felt were often inconsistent or unreliable when meeting their needs for intervention. Also, teachers knew no one would find out because there were no evaluations or teacher classroom observations being performed by any members of the leadership team. Just as CPS provided no oversight except for compliance with special education requirements and basic accountability measures through CPS quantitative surveys, teachers at the micro-level of systems had no engaged, professional oversight from the school's leadership team. The school, as a "too loosely coupled" organization required that teachers tightly couple their teaching activities to either their relationships with students (5 of 7) or to increased fidelity to the online curriculum (2 of 7).

The leadership team, from the very beginning of the school year, was a loosely coupled team. One of the school directors was unaware of her specific roles and responsibilities and felt unable to change or to add to any of the founding visions and values of the organization. She felt that the founder wanted to keep the founding ideas "intact." However, the founding ideas were based upon models that had already failed to be sustainable for the school (e.g., an intentional distributed leadership model and a balance of "zero tolerance" and restorative justice practices). By insisting on keeping the founding values intact, the founder missed an opportunity to "couple" with her new School Directors. The new School Director on the older side, in her beginning of the year interview, expressed confusion about what she was there to do. How was she supposed to keep everything intact, but also initiate needed institutional changes? There was an obvious lack of coordination between leadership team members. The loose coupling lead to this leader leaving her position and to an incremental dispossession of both teachers' instructional development and students' educational experiences for that year. CPS never intervened however because their role, by design, is to allow for their dispossession of accountability for the outcomes at charter schools. When a charter fails, it is not the district's (exo-level system's) "fault." After the critical incident that resulted in the arrest of a student on school grounds, the remaining School Director retained her position at the school but did not fulfill many of her roles or responsibilities. The details surrounding the tensions were never fully disclosed for privacy reasons, but while this School Director remained on staff, her presence was not felt in the building after the beginning of March. It was

around this time that the founder sent out an email to staff members that she would be the "commander" for the older side of the building while a disciplinary team member would be "the commander" for the younger side of the building.

Threat Rigidity Effects – The Commanders

The charter school in the study had little oversight from CPS beyond compliance visits and charter renewal procedures. The concept of threat rigidity, coming from neoinstitutional studies, conceptualizes that, "in the face of threat, organizations and individuals tend to "rigidly" pursue routine activities. Threats result in restricted information processing and a simultaneous constriction of control," (George et al., 2006, p. 350). Threat is conceptualized as a loss of control within threat rigidity, not necessarily a loss of resources, (George et al., 2006). Externally, the only resources the school needed to continue to legitimate its existence was more students so that they would be provided with more school-based, per pupil funding. Feeling defeated at being able to do much about declining enrollments (due to increasing competition from other charters and a well-established comprehensive school within the same neighborhood needing to "compete" for students) and the losses of leadership and teaching personnel (human resources), the founder did what she could to maintain an illusion of control. However, the "threats" were not imposed by CPS directly (the charter was renewed during the year when observations took place), instead, the external reality of a lack of student enrollment and the internal threat of high staff turnover created organizational threat rigidity from within.

The founder was impacted by threat rigidity effects for the entire year of school and classroom observations. CPS, as the exo-level authority, was not responsible for the success or failure of this "social project" in any way. The school, designed as a stand-alone charter meant that the Chicago Public School system did little to ensure that the school would meet their ambitious goals for students within an historically dispossessed community. Enrollment numbers were below what they needed to be to meet necessary school funding targets for the year of data collection which directly impacted their operating budgets.

The founder kept on with her routinized, patterns of organizational management behavior from the previous years of operations while struggling to maintain an illusion of control when the funding to sustain the school was simply not there. This study understands that the founder was under immense pressure to appear responsive to the changing conditions of the organization while it endured declining enrollments (which caused a decline in operational funding), a transition of leadership, high rates of teacher turnover (from both year to year and within the academic year observed), and a broken promise to all the students, families, and educators that believed they were joining an "innovative" charter school that would provide high-quality, equitable educational opportunities. The threats to the organization meant that the founder needed to appear to be responsive to these tensions and pressures while still functioning. George et al. (2006) posit, "Thus, in order to appear responsive to external pressures, yet at the same time main the coherence of internal functioning, organizations decouple their formal structures from

their activities and practices," (p. 357). This is consistent with Olsen & Sexton's (2009) study of a school coping with reforms that also experienced threat rigidity for the larger organization and a loose coupling between classroom and school policies. The founder, faced with threats that resulted in both a loss of resources and a loss of control, did her best to create a myth of an organization that was still growing and learning. In reality, however, the charter school was rapidly failing. The founder, as an unconscious member and example of Apple's (2001) professional and managerial new middle class, had activated her circuits of privilege as a white, neoliberal reformer to open a charter school that would activate neoliberal circuits of dispossession for the students, families, and community where the charter school was located. Threat rigidity meant that the illusion of becoming a sustainable school carried on at the micro-level as exo-level metrics of school efficacy (as evidenced by the data in the 5 Essentials Survey) were clearing failing. The charter school in this case study was actively and socially constructing itself as a "failing, urban school" even though it is the neoliberal solution to the social construction of the narrative of "failing, urban schools." As a neoliberal reform and a material effect of both austerity politics and of the narrative of failing, urban schools, the founder and both her leadership teams, unwittingly learned that their project, their school, and their vision of reform felt like it had been "predestined to fail."

5.2: Social Erosion and Activating Circuits of Dispossession

Neoliberalism provides the current iterations of circuits of accumulation and dispossession, but in America's history, capitalism has always allowed for outsized

accumulation (and the subsequent dispossession of "othered" citizens) in the form of wealth and resource inequalities. However, America also had post-war periods and civil rights campaigns where public goods and services were prioritized regardless of its very capitalist culture. However, neoliberalism expressly seeks to make public good and services into private markets. The social safety nets and the oversight of public institutions are dispossessed by the state in neoliberalism to form expanding markets. This contributes to social erosion as its logics and crises gradually wear away at the public's trust in public goods and services. The neoliberal crisis narrative of "failing schools" serves to do just that (Ravitch, 2010). The ideology of the score creates a crisis through the illusion of increased accountability, yet this is only to find a path towards dispossession through privatizing public markets. The intent of neoliberalism is not necessarily to improve public goods and services, it's always to make them "more efficient" or to "save taxpayer monies." In the case of charter schools, the districts can stop being held "accountable" for charter student outcomes, curricular supplies, building repairs, and other essential infrastructure; it becomes part of the charter school's school-based budget and management. The district takes care of providing monies according to per-pupil enrollments, but the rest the responsibilities for the day-to-day operations of the charter school (and its opportunities and outcomes) can be dispossessed by the district.

This was certainly the case with the charter school in this story of dispossession. However, it's important to understand that this is all a part of an ongoing conversation. "Burke's parable of the endless conversation…You arrive, and

the conversation is already in progress; you depart, and it continues without you. More an argument than a cozy chat, the conversation embodies conflict and change. Taking the form of challenge and response, this eternal debate outlives the structures that shape any of its particular phases," (Rosaldo, 1989, p. 104). The structures of public schooling are paramount in a democracy; they are the means to an educated and engaged citizenry. School choice advocates likely see private-public ventures in education as a means to "democratizing" who can offer solutions for schooling. Capitalism and democracy become conflated and democratizing/expanding markets are seen as "common sense" solutions. However, the hearts, minds, and lives of students are not able to be commodified, sorted, and compared through the ideology of the score. Neoliberalism in schooling dispossesses our humanity and citizen communities. Yet, the field could view educational dispossession as a challenge, share stories of dispossession as objects of reflection, and begin to shift the conversation towards what our responses should be at different, nested ecological levels of the system. The conversation regarding the purposes and meaning of schooling is and will always be ongoing.

Neoliberalism, through its "facade of naturalness" (Fine & Ruglis, 2009, p. 20) can be easily obscured from our consciousness, however. Educators today have been coping with increased accountability, standardization, and the ideology of the score for decades. Many educators grew up with these same neoliberal logics as their own lived experiences in K-12 schooling. Measuring, sorting, and activating circuits of worth through public schooling has been an ongoing conversation since the

Common Schools era. Proposed racial integration further agitated the ongoing conversation (post-*Brown* in 1954) and school choice entered into the ongoing conversation as white supremacy sought to perpetuate its ideology and preserve its logics of accumulation and privilege. School choice advocates today rarely even understand that school choice reforms were conceived because of overt white supremacy, whiteness as property, and white interest convergence. Neoliberalism, entering into the conversation decades after *Brown*, can easily further obscure racist practices as time passes. The U.S. never integrated or made schooling equitable, the U.S. never implemented the mandates from *Brown*, and so public schooling in the U.S. has dispossessed its own democratic ideals in favor of white supremacy that is obscured and embedded within the ideological moving substrate. Neoliberalism led to the abandonment of integration as a viable school reform (2007's *Parents Involved in Community Schools versus Seattle School District No. 1*) and shifted the field of possibilities to its own "race neutral" logics.

Race-neutrality became institutionalized, yet the ideology of the score continued to perpetuate deficit ideologies as disparities in achievement proliferated according to always (re)activating circuits of worth. The macro-level, fully infused with race-neutral, neoliberal logics and always in reciprocal relations with the exo- and micro- level ecologies through meso-level interactivity, began to remake the field of possibilities for school reforms. Post-ANAR, concurrent with NCLB, and in conjunction with Obama's Race-to-the-Top (RTTT) initiative, Chicago launched its Renaissance 2010 plan to expand access to charter providers. While other researchers

have provided stories of dispossession that focus on the closing of district-run community schools and the impacts that has on students, families, and communities, stories of dispossession that pick up where those stories left off are valuable for the field of education. If charters can activate circuits of accumulation and privilege for previously dispossessed students and families, then the field needs to include this information in the ongoing conversation. This study does not deny that possibility, however, the field also needs to understand that some charters are activating circuits of dispossession and further agitating inequities. Charters are not monoliths and both possibilities can co-exist. This study investigates a story of dispossession, seeking to understand what the field can learn by reflecting on the micro-cultural experiences of a charter school coping with doubly segregated exo- and micro-level contexts within our current neoliberal, macro-level episteme.

Lessons from Predestined Failure Within a Story of Dispossession

The field of possibilities that is reflective of macro-level ideological alignments with neoliberalism are set by historical conditions.

> Most social theorists who invoke the structure/agency dialectic cite a passage from the beginning of Karl Marx's *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.* Having just stated, with heavy irony, that history repeats itself, appearing first as a tragedy and then as a farce, Marx says, "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past." In other words, people make their own histories, but under conditions not of their own choosing, and (the theorists often add) with consequences they did not intend. Marx's dictum stresses the interplay of structure and agency, rather than granting primacy to one or the other. (Rosaldo, 1989, p. 105)

The conditions of the macro-level set the conditions for the exo-level ecology, as well, which then dictated the conditions for micro-level possibilities. The charter school and its founding, neoliberal aligning team in this study were well-positioned through circuits of privilege to activate accumulative agency through CPS's Renaissance 2010 initiative; in essence, the system created illusory conditions of agency through the creation of an educational marketplace. Illusions of agency, that would later become circuits of dispossession, applied to all the individuals in the micro-cultural and micro-level settings with varying degrees of consequence. While "Marx's dictum stresses the interplay," it is the position of this study that the structural conditions granted agential possibilities for status and material accumulation that would not have been available to the individuals without the neoliberal dispossession of a public good. The founding team and educators in the study exercised agency as they understood it, but the structures did not allow for true agency; their agency was constrained by the field of possibilities given the structural conditions of the neoliberal episteme. This study does understand that there can be true interplays between structure and agency, however, in this case, the neoliberal structures defined the agency available to the educators in the study. While it's true that educators and the leadership team members could have made other agential choices, their lived experiences within field of education which had been dominated by neoliberal reform models and logics for decades by this time, help to illuminate how their choices appeared rational. The founding team, the school leadership team during the year of data collection, and the educators in this study all grew up within

the neoliberal episteme. Neoliberal logics, and the ideological moving substrate that feed systemic circuits of worth and power, had constituted American imaginaries for decades and appeared diffuse and natural. Educators who choose to work at charter schools do so for a wide variety of reasons; for some it is an ethic of survival in a capitalist system, for others it is the crisis narrative of "failing schools" and a desire to utilize their privilege in ways that can help dispossessed communities. Educators in this study thought of charter schools as public schools that serve the same potential communities, families, and students as any other public school in the CPS district. "All kids need and deserve good schools" was often the justification, yet educators were often (and sometimes willfully so) ignor(ant) towards neoliberal logics and consequences. Professional interest convergence and the neoliberal concept that "there is no alternative" (TINA) converged within individuals to activate systemic, (exo-) level circuits of dispossession. It was the expressed intention of the school's founder and of the educators within this study to activate circuits of accumulation and privilege for not only themselves (as members of the new professional and managerial middle class), but also for the students who would attend their charter school. However, systemic (macro- and exo-level) circuits of dispossession are far more power than micro-level circuits of accumulation. Simply put, systems move through individuals as individuals attempt to move through systems.

The founder and her leadership team members who served at the school up to the year of data collection could all be considered neoliberal school reformers given their professional paths to becoming school leaders. This is not an identity that any of

them would likely be aware of, and it's certainly not how they would have described themselves. All of the leaders described themselves as social justice-oriented educators working towards extending educational equity in meaningful and innovative ways. Alternate certification programs like Teach for America and teaching fellows' programs do not appear to be neoliberal reforms to those who are applying to join them or who are entering education from another career field. Even within university teaching programs and certification courses, one might never hear about "neoliberal" educational reforms or entirely understand the complexities of institutional dispossession. That is how diffuse neoliberal ideologies and logics have become, they simply are the field of educational reform possibilities these days.

This study is written from one line of paradigmatic thinking on school reform (public schooling is a public good) and the school in the study was conceived of within a paradigm of neoliberal thinking (where schooling is a marketplace that can be public, private, parochial, private-public, philanthropic, for-profit, etc.). This study understands that the only way to have equitable schools is for the investment of public monies and taxpayer dollars to intersect with the political will necessary to regenerate the public's trust in public schooling. This study does not deny that private, parochial, and other school choice options should exist, but does not believe that public monies should be funding these options. Private markets should require private funding sources. Diverting public monies to private and quasi, private-public providers results in a systemic and institutional dispossession of not only public schooling, but also of public educators and the communities and families that are

purported to be served by public schooling. This study is intended to be an object of reflection and an example of a story of dispossession. It enters into several ongoing conversations about neoliberalism and its effects on historically and generationally dispossessed communities.

The charter school in the study represents the micro-cultural unit of analysis and the ecologically nested, micro-level manifested experiences of both macro-level and exo-level conditions. The school would not have come into existence without ANAR, NCLB, RTTP, and other reform movements that privilege market logics and create an urgency to "fix" a broken, public system by divesting in its existence. The neoliberal logics were given primacy at both the macro- and exo-levels before the school's micro-level culture could ever take form. The founder had to activate individual circuits of privilege to position herself as a potential reform leader. Her micro-cultural experiences studying finance and earning an MBA alongside her experiences within teaching, working for educational non-profits, and her time working at the Time Renaissance School Fund uniquely positioned her for creating and submitting an RFP for her own business-aligning charter school and are indicative of meso-level interactivity. Although her professional experiences working within schools was minimal, the RFP authorizers were open to "innovative" ideas and a minimal number of professional educational experiences or years of service (a typically well-regulated process for district principals and school leaders) were not a prerequisite for opening a charter school. Neoliberal circuits of privilege within the

field of educational reform created the context which culminated in the approval of their RFP and the granting of their charter school within CPS.

By the year when data collection took place for this study, the charter was struggling to fulfill its visions and promises to students. One of the primary stresses was in the form of declining enrollments. The school-based, per-pupil budget relied on robust enrollment and the school was struggling to both recruit and retain students, teachers, and leaders. Because the two new instructional leaders left mid-year, there was no opportunity to sit down and talk with them about their decisions to depart mid-year. While it was obvious that the school was struggling on nearly every level (academically, instructionally, culture-wise, morale-wise, retention-wise, financially, etc.) with the older side of the school even becoming increasingly dysfunctional for students over the course of the year, the only reflections able to be captured are from the founder, and one of the previous school instructional leaders who volunteered to contribute to the study. The founder, when asked what lessons she's learned from leading the charter for the previous five years, had this to say:

Researcher: What lessons, if you zoom out and look at schooling more broadly, what larger lessons have you learned?

Founder: I know [name of the previous instructional leader] thinks that single site charter schools shouldn't exist…it's too much! Too much to try to create everything without a network of support…that they're better able to succeed in networks or district schools because they have baseline structures that are given to them. We have to create all of those, we have to figure out everything and it's full of difficulty. I've definitely learned how hard it is to do anything…starting things and making change is really difficult…and the degree of difficulty as a start up in one of the hardest neighborhoods was more than we can handle, I think. So there just needs to be a lot

> more…thinking through how do you truly structure systems to handle that level…the additional degrees of difficulty…compounded deprivation…you can look at the poverty rates for plenty of schools in Chicago that have high rates of poverty, but definitely don't have the level of challenge or levels of trauma that we have…having been discriminated against for generations and having divestment for generations. Generational trauma and racism and all sorts of systemic inequalities…our community is disconnected from the city…we need to have critical conversations and really recognize the different levels of challenges that different kids and different communities face.

The founder continued and concluded by stating that "we need to change the discourse." After years of working within a dispossessed community, the founder came to believe that generations of institutional divestment and community dispossession were fueling systemic inequalities. The single site charter school that her and her two leadership teams attempted to lead were no match for macro- and exo- level systemic circuits of dispossession. A central finding of this study is that when institutional dispossession reoccurs over multiple generations, intergenerational traumas are transmitted as the macro-level, ideologies assert powerful narratives and interact with exo-level conditions to create micro-level experiences that deny healthy structures and agency to entire communities as they experience divestment and dispossession within neoliberal contexts. This study understands "compounded deprivation" as activated circuits of dispossession. Perkins & Sampson in a 2015 study came to, "define our main indicator of compounded poverty, or deprivation, as the extent to which participants who experience poverty at the individual level (defined by household income) simultaneously experience it at the contextual level," (p. 41). The researchers defined contextual poverty based on economic and

household measures (unemployment, households headed by single females, public assistance income) that applied to entire neighborhoods. They found that "the experience of compounded poverty is powerfully durable," and that their "evidence implies that we need to make durable investments in disadvantaged urban neighborhoods instead – to match the persistent nature of the social and institutional divestment that such neighborhoods have endured over many years," (pp. 49 & 53).

The single site charter school in this study was clearly not a durable investment. In fact, the former founding leadership/instructional team member (that agreed to contribute to the study) came to believe that their school was "predestined for failure." Macro-level and exo-level contexts, based upon neoliberal logics (white supremacy, individualism, the market as equalizer, etc.), did not support the sustainability of their organization. Instead, the contexts appeared to be inviting their failure more than supporting their success. The former leader had this to say when specifically asked about systemic white supremacy at the exo-level (CPS school district):

Researcher: Did you feel like the district, and if so in what ways, reinforced white supremacy on a systemic level?

Former Leader: Yes…By ignoring us... There's no institutional support for charter schools outside of compliance and special education. There was no meaningful oversight - there was evaluation, but there was no support…that's the reality for most...and for many district schools too…there's a lot of schools that are left out in the cold. And they're left to be quote, unquote equal because there's not...the funding per student is the same at [names an intersection within a dispossessed community] as it is in [name of a wealthy neighborhood] ...So we're all treated as if everyone gets

> the same, and obviously we're getting totally different experiences in different communities, and we see all different outcomes.

While it may seem obvious that as a charter school, they would be independent from CPS oversight (with the exceptions of state/federal compliance and special education), the former leader began to understand that CPS was in fact dispossessing responsibility for both educators and their students through the charter school model, and therefore the entire community where the ”failing” school are located. The teachers at the charter school could not attend CPS district-wide professional development sessions or even opt into them. For a single site charter school, this proved challenging and district support for teachers' professional development could have been a meaningful touchpoint. Additionally, many of the students and families that were willing to attend a new charter school were doing so based their previous discontent with or because of previous dispossession from their community-based school(s). Unsatisfied, discontent parents were desperate to find a school setting that wanted to recruit their child and educate them. However, the consequence for educators and students within this single site charter school was shared dispossession and, ultimately, the school's failure. The loose coupling with CPS was not a sustainable or durable solution, even though it is done so *by design*. When asked about what advice the former leader would have for those who might consider opening a charter school, she had this to add:

> **Researcher**: What would you want reformers, or other people who are looking at starting schools or charter schools…what would you want them to know?

Former Leader: I would want there to be, at a policy level..in regards to funding, a recognition that students that face poverty and violence and all the things going on…that are the impacts of white supremacy and the way that things operate...that actually, we need to shift the funding. We need more money, more resources…to attract the top-level talent, to create infrastructures that are lasting in relationship with the community, that it is all possible beyond all doubt, but we need to stop acting like everyone can do the same with the same.

The former leader felt that their school-based funding for per-pupil enrollment was not sufficient given the needs of their students. It is critical to realize that CPS was exacerbating enrollment issues within this community, however, not just within their stand-alone charter school.

Researcher: Earlier in the conversation, you had talked about the idea that you had felt like, given the enrollment and the funding models, that the whole thing was kind of a "predestined failure." The school is now closed, can you reflect on that idea along with the enrollment issues that you had, and what do people need to know, what can people learn from the creation and existence of your previous school?

Former Leader: I think that an easy lesson could be that, or a way to look at it, could be that the neighborhood, with losing population overall, wasn't the right place to start a school. I think that's perhaps a lesson on its own... But it's bigger than that…and I don't know that new schools need to be created, but there is an opportunity gap, right? There is a vacuum of...excellent school options where [name of the school], laid down roots…but that creating new… essentially a new place…and I don't want to say creates new problems, but to try to fill that void with…enrolling that many students every year was not possible…

Researcher: Do you feel like CPS, would someone have had access to the information that could have predicted that?

Former Leader: Yes, I don't think an authorizer should have authorized the opening of two new schools within the year in [name of the neighborhood], in an area with declining enrollments. Overall, people are just moving out of that area of Chicago, so especially…approving two [grade level schools] to take from other [same grade level] schools that are already very small in the community…there just weren't enough students. You were left to see if you can get that draw, and that is not responsible in my view now, but of course I didn't understand all of that at the time.

The former charter school leader began to reflect on the marketplace logics of charter schools and came to realize that creating competition doesn't equate to creating excellent school options. When one triangulates this experience with other research on the ways in which CPS is dispossessing low-income, Black communities in Chicago, it becomes clear that neighborhood schools not only suffer through neoliberal, market-based reforms, but that whole neighborhoods and educators within the profession (both district and charter teachers and administrators) also experience professional dispossession as their workplaces become unsustainable.

The school's founder and the former school leader both came to recognize that neoliberal macro- and exo-level solutions to micro-cultural community issues of poverty and dispossession were tone deaf, at best and malevolent, at worst. The philanthrocapitalist funding from the Gates and Walton Foundations served as start-up money that only helped to open the school's doors. Sustainable, school-based, per-pupil enrollment funding models within increasing competitive educational "marketplaces" that are experiencing declining enrollments serves only to dispossess students, families, and educators within that community. When declining enrollments

can be used as a metric to shutter community-based schools (micro-level instiutitions) based on a "failure" to enroll students (Ewing, 2018), charter schools and the competition they bring only serve as a reminder of exo-level community dispossession and intergenerational traumas based in institutional discrimination (the meso-level interactive effects).

The schools that "fail" to enroll enough students, struggle to provide services for students and the exo-level accountability numbers that are used for school evaluations are simply utilized to justify their divestment and abandonment. It is important to note that the charter school in the study gave up once the budgetary realities became clear and decided to shut its doors. CPS never rescinded their charter or attempted to address the structural, micro-cultural issues within the school. The tumultuous year (observed during the data collection of this study) was never observed or even known to CPS even though the students in the school are part of CPS. The charter school was authorized in order to provide competitive options with no oversight, support, or meaningful engagement with CPS. CPS students, regardless of whether they choose to attend charter, district, or magnet schools are still CPS students. Chicago has several large charter school networks that can provide district-like supports for new schools that scale-up their models. However, single-site charter schools are really left to their own devices. The system allowed for the creation of this charter school and then continued to create conditions in the exo-level (opening new schools in a neighborhood experiencing declining enrollments/population loss) that would agitate the sustainability of all schools within that community.

Chapter Six: Methodological Reflections and Lessons from Researching Race in Schooling

In this chapter, methodological reflections on the processes of research are discussed. The reflections are personal in nature, so the first-person point of view makes the most sense for explaining my experiences and emerging understandings as a researcher. While I did come to better contextualize my own experiences as an educator within neoliberal aligning programs and schools throughout this study's duration, it was important that I did not assume high levels of shared professional experiences with the educators who volunteered as research participants. This chapter helps to explain the ethical tensions and methodological realities that I met in the field while conducting this research.

6.1 Faithful Witnessing & Worlds-Traveling

At the heart of this dissertation lies the idea, borrowed from psychological anthropology, that "…the individual exists only within a social and cultural context. Therefore, we can really know ourselves only if we know others, and we can really know others only if we know the cultures in which they (and we) exist," (Lindholm, 2001, p. 10). An understanding of our larger cultural contexts and those around us is therefore essential for understanding ourselves and our actions. In many ways, I came to know myself and the systems around me better by engaging in this research and by attempting to understand and empathize with the educators at the school site where the research took place. As a former charter-school teacher and administrator from the City of Chicago, the very act of observing educators within a similar micro-

level culture activated a level of empathy for their experiences that made the concepts of "faithful witnessing" and "world"-traveling essential for disseminating and understanding the data, data analysis, and the resulting conclusions around circuits of dispossession (Lugones, 2003).

Maria Lugones (2003), in her book Pilgrimaces/Peregrinajes, describes the concepts of "faithful witnessing" and "world-traveling."

> To witness faithfully is difficult, given the manyness of worlds of sense related through power so that oppressive and fragmenting meaning saturate many worlds of sense in hard to detect ways. A collaborator witnesses on the side of power, while a faithful witness witnesses against the grain of power, on the side of resistance. To witness faithfully, one must be able to sense resistance, to interpret behavior as resistant even when it is dangerous, when that interpretation places on psychologically against common sense, or when one is moved to act in collision with common sense, with oppression. Faithful witnessing leads one away from a monosensical life. One ceases to have expectations, desires, and beliefs that fit one for a life in allegiance with oppression. (Lugones, 2003, p. 7).

I would extend Lugones' description to include both resistances *and* resiliencies as faithful witnessing. Resiliencies to oppression are just as powerful and empowering as resistances to oppression. The ability to not absorb (ideological) oppressions and internalize them and/or the capacity to be able to work through internalized, oppressive ideologies (such as white supremacy, patriarchy/paternalism, and neoliberal scarcity/austerity) and recognize your inherent worth and connectedness to "differently situated others" (Ford, 2009) is paramount for humanizing the micro-cultural world of the school. Additionally, as a "world-traveling"[7] researcher,

[7] Lugones' work on world-traveling is based in her intersectional identities. I am extending the term to include my chosen professional identities, however, I in no way intend to conflate chosen identities with fixed, intersectional identities. I am utilizing the conceptual nature of 'world-traveling' to explain differential and emerging paradigms and consciousness.

Lugones helped me to understand that I needed to view my work as paradigmatic world-traveling. Paradigmatic world traveling in this study refers to the macro-level alignments that were present in the two different worlds that I was traveling between as a researcher: the academy and the research/school site.

Simply put, studying years of theory and philosophy regarding our larger economic, political, and cultural macro-level conditions and socio-cultural practices of teaching and learning deeply changed my paradigmatic world-views as an educator. The consciousness and paradigms that I once, rather unconsciously, had accepted to be true (as a practice-based teacher and administrator) had been upended by the time I was ready to enter the micro-cultural world of the school that participated in this study in a new role as a researcher. As a former charter schoolteacher and administrator who was unaware of the contexts of cultural neoliberalism, I had some understandings of the micro-cultural world I was entering into as a researcher, but to assume parallels and similarities between my previous experiences and the world I was suddenly researching would be to hold an "arrogant perception" that assumed shared experiences with research participants (Ford, 2009; Frye, 1983; Lugones, 1987). Maureen Ford (2009), drawing from both Iris Marion Young and Maria Lugones, claims, "that arrogant perception is a particular type of epistemic error to which people who are in positions of social privilege are systemically oriented…the challenges implicit in knowing across difference can be exacerbated by the effects of institutional power relations," (Ford, 2009). Academic researchers are inherently in socially privileged positions of power. Furthermore,

Lugones (1987) tells us that, “Those of us who are “world”-travellers have the distinct experience of being different in different “worlds” and of having the capacity to remember other “worlds” and ourselves in them, (p. 11). This remembering of the other “worlds” and ourselves in them needs to be critically reflected upon by researchers throughout the research process (“worlds”-traveling), and a methodology to do so would be valuable tool for the field. Engaging in a critical reflection of the “worlds” one is travelling between can help to avoid applying an arrogant perceiver’s biases to research that requires sensitivity and empathy for growth within the field.

For example, applying an arrogant perception when studying public educators/public educational settings could potentially lead to victim blaming, while applying a loving perception can lead to deeper understandings of how systems move through all of us to be reified. Shaming and blaming individuals for their humanness through research findings will not change the systems that created the conditions and paradigms which perpetuate the inequities and circuits of dispossession that are/were being witnessed and studied within a public institutional setting. As the researcher in this study, engaging a critical, methodological bifocality (Weis and Fine, 2012) allowed for me to step back and practice empirical integrity (instead of assuming symmetry with my participants) by deeply investigating both the macro-level influences within each educator’s unique, racially/ethnically de-essentialized, micro-cultural worlds and lived experiences (Mahiri, 2018). The dehumanization and dispossession that neoliberal reforms impose in public schooling are not equally felt by individuals from different racial, ethnic, and/or cultural backgrounds; we each

internalize and create conditions for personalized versions of "interest convergence" or construct an "ethic of survival" that are unique to our experiences and personal paradigms. While less than ideal, it can be essential for human survival within a neoliberal, capitalist system even when it creates tensions and contradictions between what we intend and what we practice.

Asymmetrical Reciprocity

My prior experiences working in schools were very similar to those who participated in my research, however the micro-cultural "worlds" of our schools were vastly different. In order to make sure I did not assume symmetry between myself and my research participants, I needed to take their views into account without overstepping boundaries that would speak for them. Instead, I needed to be sensitive to the concept of asymmetrical reciprocity (La Caze, 2008). Borrowing from Marion Young (1997), La Caze (2008) espouses that,

> Young develops the idea of asymmetrical reciprocity by maintaining that people should regard each other as "irreversible," or not mirrors of each other, which she believes is the image that the concept of symmetry between human beings evokes. Instead, we should accept the differences of the other, adopt a stance of "moral humility," acknowledge that our relations with others are asymmetrically reciprocal, and not attempt to espouse their standpoint and speak on their behalf. Asymmetrical reciprocity is an attempt to understand each other across differences without reversing perspectives or identifying with each other. The idea that we can take others' views into account without imaginatively occupying their position or "putting ourselves in their place." (p. 119)

La Caze, while theorizing Young's work, helped me to understand that, "in relations structured by oppression…projections are likely to be damaging, as they will often involve stereotypes and ideologies," (La Caze, 2008, p. 120). To guard against

ideological projections that could be harmful to my research participants, I needed to utilize Weis and Fine's (2012) critical, methodological bifocality. This bifocal lens allows for meaningful discernment of how ideological contradictions can play out in individual participants' lives; we are all impacted by ideologies and ideologies move through us whether we are aware of them or not. At times, our actions and our stated commitments can be full of tensions and contradictions as we navigate our worlds. This is certainly true within neoliberal school reform contexts that purport to be equity focused when neoliberalism can be defined as "accumulation through dispossession," (Harvey, 2005).

The empirical study from which this methodological reflection chapter comes was inherently political work. The circuits of worth that needed to be traced and understood to unveil the phenomenon of "predestined failure" that the charter school and charter school educators in the study experienced required a deep understanding of the macro-level and exo-level paradigmatic alignments that played into the creation of the micro-cultural "world" of the school, and to see how their interactivity played out on the meso-level. Additionally, my time in the academy has shifted my own professional, intellectual, and personal paradigms from ones that I had held as a practicing teacher and administrator. It is for this reason that this methodological reflection utilizes the same bifocality as the empirical study itself.

This reflection if my attempt to explain my understanding of my macro-level ideological paradigms and micro-level alignments both prior to the academy and then detail how they shifted as I gained experience as an academic/researcher. Without

experiencing this deep shifting of paradigms firsthand, I would not have access to the consciousness that was necessary to apply a critical, methodological bifocality to this study. Qualitative researchers are their own research instruments (St. Pierre, year?) and it is important to consider how a researcher's shifting and emerging paradigms inform research dynamics and researchers' "world"-traveling as they constantly unfold throughout the data collection and data analysis processes. Ultimately, this methodological reflection will attempt to describe why I believe I needed to embody a "loving perception" instead of an "arrogant perception" to the data, findings, and conclusions of this study (Lugones, 1987).

Paradigm Shifting

Researchers are natural "worlds"-travelers, moving back and forth between the academy and our research sites and often going about our work from liminal spaces that require that we travel between different micro-cultural—if not also exo-cultural and macro-cultural—worlds. These liminal spaces and between-worlds are unique to the researcher's experiences. Our personal histories, that may coincide or align with the research worlds we choose to enter and investigate can never be the same as the previous worlds we remember inhabiting when we lived and worked within only one of them.

The academy has the power to entirely shift the paradigms of a researcher so that they can witness worlds similar to those that they previously lived within in ways that are entirely new. In other words, no matter how much I thought I understood the contexts of charter schools within Chicago because I taught at one and served as an

instructional coach at another, the "world"-traveling that occurred after six years of academic study at the doctoral level entirely shifted my understanding of how macro-level and exo-level systems impact micro-cultural settings and of the individuals struggling and/or striving within them. The world I previously thought I knew from the consciousness of a teacher and an administrator was recast in entirely new paradigms when engaging the consciousness of a researcher.

In particular, the systems of power inherent to American mythologies (the American Dream, America as a meritocracy, etc.), circuits of worth (both privilege and dispossession), and the ideologies that were previously obscured (or, more likely, that my white, middle class, heteronormative upbringing had obscured for me) suddenly came into clear focus. Despite believing that I had always been working towards social justice, I came to understand that much of my life had been lived under a veil of ignorance, (Rawls, 1971). This ignor(ance) was not intentional on my part but was a coping mechanism from unexamined, societal circuits of worth and a legacy of white privilege that made it hard to understand what resisting systems of power really looked like in practice. When I first began teaching, I had some understanding that I was from a middle-class, white family that provided a safety net for my mis-steps and mistakes, but I did not understand what differently situated others and their social positionings looked like and how their positionings impacted their life outcomes. And more than that, I did not know the particular circumstances of my own society; I was not able to conceptualize neoliberal economic, political, and cultural alignments deeply enough to understand, at the time, how white, settler

colonialism and neoliberal capitalism were continuing to dispossess communities of color and those with other traditionally marginalized group identities (LGBTQ, the disabled, etc.). I believed the nation's systems were working to provide increasingly equitable opportunities and outcomes to all because neoliberal systems had worked in my favor throughout my lived experiences.

As a former Teach for America (TFA) corps member and a former charter school educator, I was lacking a full understanding of what neoliberal school reforms truly were and how they reinforced existing systems of power and circuits of worth until I engaged in doctoral studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Having grown up in the 1980s with Ronald Reagan as the first American President that I remembered, my macro-cultural life had been defined by neoliberal capitalism and neoliberal logics. The concept that "there is no alternative" (TINA) to neoliberal policies and logics had shaped my thinking throughout my lifetime without me even realizing this had occurred. Neoliberal reforms, policies, and logics were the air I was totally unaware that I was breathing, especially as an educator.

I did not understand David Harvey's concept of neoliberalism as "accumulation through dispossession," (Harvey, 2005). I had never heard the term neoliberalism applied outside of economics and, even as the term applies to economics, I didn't have a full grasp of what the blurring of public-private entities would do and what "the markets as equalizer" actually meant in practice. John Rawls (1971) applies teleological theory to help explain how this might have occurred for me,

> It is essential to keep in mind that in a teleological theory the good is defined independently from the right. This means two things. First, the theory accounts for our considered judgements as to which things are good (our judgements of value) as a separate class of judgements intuitively distinguishable by common sense, and then proposes the hypothesis that the right is maximizing the good as already specified. Second, the theory enables one to judge the goodness of things without referring to what is right. (Rawls, 1971, p. 25)

Having grown up with neoliberal logics as common sense, neoliberal school reforms felt, at the time when I was a practicing educator in the K-12 system, like they were good options for social justice within education. Maximizing the good was the right thing to do within my teacher/administrator consciousness. "More precisely, those institutions and acts are right which of the available alternatives produce the most good, or at least as much good as any of the other institutions and acts open as real possibilities," (Rawls, 1971, p. 24). The neoliberal narrative of "failing public schools" and the perceived need for school reforms that could produce "the most good, or at least as much good as any of the other institutions" is what led me to believe that TFA and charter schools could be right and good solutions for public school reforms. In my mind at the time, students in racially segregated, low-income schools needed good school options now and charter schools and networks were attempting to change and disrupt the "failing" system from within. Neoliberalism, and the narrative of institutional failure that it created within educational reform movements, created and reinforced a veil of ignor(ance) that allowed for me to reify and reinforce systems of power without understanding that I was recreating the very circuits of worth that I had hoped to resist. I was aware of wide resistance to TFA

within the field of education, but the unconscious veil of interest convergence did not stop me from joining the organization.

Teach for America was an AmeriCorps program that appeared to me at the time to be a federally supported program for entering into the profession in a non-traditional manner. In retrospect, I can now understand that it was a neoliberal school reform that creates members of "a professional and managerial new middle class," (Apple, 2001). The interstices that Teach for America creates for its corps members as they enter the profession are complex and deeply rooted in the larger culture in which we exist. Teach for America and similar alternate certification programs reflect and are a product of a larger neoliberal culture and urban, austerity politics, however, it took years of functioning within neoliberal paradigms to fully understand that they were never going to solve the issues they purported to address. The accumulation I experienced as a member of the professional and managerial new middle class, as I moved into school administration from teaching, felt unearned and problematic to me, but I didn't fully understand why. It wasn't until my doctoral studies that I began to understand that American culture did not just rely on capitalism as an economic system, but that neoliberal capitalism was fully defining America's cultural paradigms too. As a white, middle-class, heteronormative-passing woman working within education, I was well set up to accumulate managerial positions, advanced degrees, additional certifications, and increasing salaries and responsibilities. I was told my entire life that I would be able to do so by my family and society. In other words, American mythologies, like the American Dream and

American as a meritocracy, would function for me if I worked hard. And those mythologies were true for me; after just four years of teaching, it was possible to move into charter school administration without completing any additional education or certifications. Accumulation through dispossession can only move through individuals to exist at system levels and to (re)create micro-level manifestations of neoliberal narratives. However, those individuals that the system is moving through are often doing a calculus of survival and unconscious interest convergence that is complex to understand.

Walking into the charter school that served as my research site after five years of studying neoliberal and American capitalist ideologies and how they shape our worlds through language, narratives, mythologies, and practices was paradigm shifting for me. I spent an entire year with teachers during an extremely tumultuous, even professionally traumatic, academic year. I had no idea when I picked the school site that the vast majority of my research participants would be Black teachers, with half of my participants being Black, male teachers. My study was designed to explore how race functioned in classroom instruction: How did teachers engage race and how did they understand, react, and address racial tensions in their classrooms? Admittedly, based on statistics and my time as a researcher, I expected to have a larger percentage of both white and female teachers in my study. I wasn't centering whiteness or femaleness within the teaching profession with this assumption; I was simply expecting a teaching demographic that was more reflective of national and citywide (Chicago) averages. The opportunity to work with and spend time with so

many educators of color was exciting, but also intimidating as I collected data and began to digest the full scope of what my intended study was designed to investigate.

After my year of quasi-ethnographic data collection, my understandings of how race was engaged within classrooms began to dramatically shift. Because my research included a full interview protocol that probed into each teacher's micro-cultural backgrounds (Mahiri, 2018), both their personal and professional experiences, I began to wonder if many of them were functioning with internalizations of white supremacy and white, dominant norms (a reflection of our larger culture within public schooling). As I came to witness and understand their personal stories and professional experiences, I began to see how internalizations of white supremacy manifest in individuals. I began to understand how systems move through all of us.

Most importantly, I began to understand that I would not be able to contextualize my data at the individual level; the system would need to be the focus of my analysis. In a sense, I began to understand how white supremacy (because it acts as a circuit of privilege for me as a white, middle-class, heteronormative-passing, woman and can act as a circuit of dispossession for those who are differently situated others) creates ideological and institutional traumas (limiting beliefs about oneself based on cultural norms, ideologies, and systems) that many people experience and then internalize. Witnessing the ways in which Black teachers might have internalized white supremacy (a collective and potentially racialized, ideological trauma) meant that the empirical data that I had collected in their classrooms could

not be easily explained without speaking *with* them. I felt I would not be able to speak *for* them and/or make conjectures about their engagement of race within their instructional practices, or in regard to their professional development as teachers. To do so would be to engage an arrogant perception and could potentially be harmful to my study participants.

The data I collected from interviews and classroom observations suggested that teachers and administrators might have negative internalizations of white supremacy that might correlate with some of their instructional choices around engaging race in the classroom. More research into the effects of internalizations of white supremacy (and patriarchy/paternalism and neoliberal capitalism) on educators and their instructional practices regarding racial and ethnic identities needs to be specifically conducted; research that is well-designed for illuminating those connections. In essence, research needs to be purposefully designed to allow space for the participants to speak *with* researcher(s). The original study design for my dissertation proposal sought to illuminate how teachers' micro-cultural understandings show up in their classroom practices, but the individual psychology of the negative manifestations of internalizations (of white supremacy, patriarchy/paternalism, and capitalist scarcity/lack mentality) was beyond the scope of my understandings when I wrote the original proposal. My veil of ignorance was lifted while conducting the study and I began to understand that we are all, as members of American society, enduring neoliberalism and its macro-level paradigmatic commitments and their micro-level manifestations and effects in vastly

different ways. I cannot assume that I could interpret how a Black, male teacher on the Southside of Chicago internalizes or resists white supremacist oppression without conducting research that was designed to answer that very specific question and that allows for research participants to speak fully for themselves and their understandings of their own internalizations or resistances.

By the time my data was being analyzed and these ethical concerns began to arise (again and again) with my exploration of each educator's individual case, it was too late for me to go back and gather additional data; the school had closed and I had no way to reach participants for additional interviews. Additionally, it would have been outside of the boundaries of my proposed research. Instead, it made the more sense to lean into the empirical flexibility of my grounded theory approach to shift my unit of analysis away from individual teachers and onto the collective micro-culture the educators were engaging with daily: the school. Shifting from individuals to the school for the micro-level unit of analysis would serve to protect my research participants and would allow for a more meaningful analysis that centered circuits of worth at a systemic level.

6.2: Engaging with a Loving Perception in Teacher Research

Schools are public institutions that reflect our societal issues, ideals, and are sites where we play out societal conflicts, (Cohen & Neufeld, 1981). The need for expanding markets is integral to capitalism expansion and neo-colonialism. Public schooling and its ongoing neoliberal narrative of failure since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (1983) has been enduring standardization, a blurring of private-public

services, and neoliberal logics for decades. As humans living in a shared, neoliberal culture with macro-level ideologies that promote the construction of false narratives about public schooling (Ravitch, 2010), it is easy to extend the narrative of failure from schools to educators. In other words, the logic follows that if schools are failing, it must be because individual teachers and educators are failing students and families. Yet, we have evidence that it is neoliberal reform policies that take the form of standardization, "teacher-proof" curriculums, and accountability that are constraining educators (Ravitch, 2010). In other words, the false narratives that are created through neoliberal discourses become toxic to the field of public education and to public educators; the educators become the "problem" to fix instead of the ineffective policy changes and austerity politics that are creating the problems in the first place (Lipman, 2011). Neoliberal school reforms serve to dispossess educators and their professional agency as much as they serve to dispossess communities perceived to have low levels of worth within neoliberal logics and paradigms.

The funding that is provided by neoliberal-aligning philanthrocapitalist organizations largely support the proliferation of charter schools and school choice movements. The funding provided to open charter schools, like the school in this study, are often one-time grants and special programs to help schools launch or open initially, but then rely on student enrollment for sustaining their operations long-term. The administrators and educators felt a sense of "predestined failure" as a result of systemic dispossession. The administrators who initially opened the school truly believed that neoliberal reforms would be systemic solutions, but instead began to

feel dispossessed by CPS. The guilt and shame that these administrators felt as they watched their good intentions create further dispossession for a community of students and families that they intended to serve was authentic and genuine. Educators do not open a school with an intention to have it fail the very same year that their founding class of students finally reach graduation. The administrators felt defeated by a lack of sustainable funding, the effects of poverty and trauma on their students' lives, a lack of support from CPS, and were not sure how any stand-alone charter school (without a charter network) with the exo-level conditions their student community faced would have been successful. Their failure was more predictable than their likelihood of success.

Systemic Trauma + Schooling

I would argue that this is all evidence of neoliberalism and the dispossession of public services that neoliberal logics are designed to facilitate. In a city like Chicago, this means that public monies can be diverted to other municipal causes and/or the funding can just be cut to reduce public school funding altogether. The effects are the same though; the most vulnerable populations of students, overwhelmingly students of color and/or low-income students, are offered diminished educational options and their communities increasingly face divestment and dispossession (Lipman, 2009). The lack of institutional stability for students means that neoliberal school reforms are assuredly inflicting institutional and systemic traumas on dispossessed student populations as they do their best to cope with school closures. Imagine experiencing your neighborhood school be forcibly closed by CPS

(often with a year or two of disappearing services and programs within the school before full closure happens), transferring to a charter school, and then having it fail as well. A student living in a low-income community of color in Chicago during these reform movements could potentially need to transfer schools *many* times while attempting to simply attend and finish their K-12 schooling. Students and families who are impacted by these neoliberal policies and reforms are coping with systemic, institutional traumas that do not value their humanity. When one considers that multiple generations of families from these communities have been continually denied equal services and have been subject to circuits of dispossession over and over again when it comes to schooling, distrust, apathy, and resistance suddenly become rational responses and relevant coping mechanisms for intergenerational experiences with neoliberal, capitalist dispossession and trauma.

Reconciling Ideological Traumas and Interest Convergence

Understanding that generations of low-income, disenfranchised, and dispossessed families and communities of color have been impacted by ever-shifting, capitalist circuits of dispossession (industrial capitalism, corporate capitalism, and now, neoliberal capitalism) is critical for educators that want to help and serve in these impacted communities. Applying a trauma-informed lens to better understand how families and individuals are impacted by collective ideologies and their systemic manifestations can offer ways to approach working in dispossessed communities with the goal of building resiliencies and focusing on asset-based trauma healing.

Even two people who experience the same exact event will have different reactions based on previous experiences and sensitivities to processing critical incidents (Van Der Kolk, 2015). Trauma is present when our bodies and central nervous system react in ways to protect us from effects of an adverse event; typically understood as either flight, fight, freeze, or fawn (and, in some cases, two of those automatic responses are triggered simultaneously). Complex trauma is trauma experienced not as an acute event—although complex trauma may include some acute events too—but rather trauma that is sustained over time. Complex, ideological traumas then can apply to collective groups of people. For instance, the effects of slavery and anti-Blackness on generations of African Americans which include moments of acute trauma (slavery, lynchings, race riots, police brutality, sterilization) and sustained traumas that deny equal treatment under the law (under resourced schools, lack of equal municipal services, the effects of the eugenics movement, workplace discrimination, micro-aggressions, etc.). America has not yet reconciled the ongoing, complex ideological traumas that our nation has imposed upon communities of color, indigenous populations, women, LGBTQ communities, the disabled, etc.

Neoliberalism further exacerbates these traumas by denying that they even exist. The market as neutralizer means that American society often blames African Americans for the economic traumas imposed upon their families, communities, and collectives. Dumas (2016), specifically in regard to the realities of Black Americans, explains,

> In this nation that has ostensibly advanced beyond Black and white, it is the Black that becomes anachronistic, an impediment to the realization of Americans' national-popular imagination of who "we" want to be. Even as the nation (and indeed, the world) embraces a certain kind of multiculturalism, people strain against the dark. (pp.11-12)

Many Americans want to believe that America is post-racial, but to do so is to deny the lived experiences of generations of African Americans. Denying the lived experiences of entire collective of American citizens is malevolent and serves to gaslight them while continuing to do harm. Dumas (2016) continues to explain the concept of anti-Blackness,

> That is, even as race continues to structure capitalism, which in turn facilitates white accumulation, the official stance of the state is against racism; blatantly racist laws and government practices have been declared illegal, and the market embraces outreach to a wide multicultural range of consumers. In this context, there is a rush to celebrate the social and economic advancement of select Black individuals and, perhaps more significantly, the success of other groups of people of color. In fact, it is the social and cultural inclusion of non-Black people of color that is often offered as evidence of the end of racial animus and racial barriers in society. Therefore, the failure of large swaths of the Black population is purported to be a result of cultural deficits within the Black. (p.15)

Neoliberal apathy fueled by individualism and the myth of America as a meritocracy allows many Americans to accept the mistreatment and continued oppression of others. However, neoliberal apathy is directly connected to white (supremacist) apathy.

Understanding racism as an ideological, cultural trauma on the collective, macro-level and racism as narcissistic abuse/injury on the individual, micro-level can allow us to think of racism through a trauma-informed lens. Jeffrey Alexander (2004) posits,

> Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible makes upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways. As we develop it here, cultural trauma is first of all and empirical, scientific concept, suggesting new meaningful and causal relationships between previously unrelated events, structures, perceptions, and actions. But this new scientific concept also illuminates an emerging domain of social responsibility and political action. It is by constructing cultural traumas that social groups, national societies, and sometimes even entire civilizations not only cognitively identify the existence and source of human suffering but "take on board" some significant responsibility for it. Insofar as they identify the cause of trauma, and thereby assume such moral responsibility, members of collectivities define their solidary relationships in ways that, in principle, allow them to share the sufferings of others. Is the suffering of others also our own? In thinking that it might in fact be, societies expand the circle of we. By the same token, social groups can, and often do, refuse to recognize the existence of others' trauma, and because of their failure they cannot achieve a moral stance. By denying the reality of others' suffering, people not only diffuse their own responsibility for the suffering but often project the responsibility for their own suffering on these others. (p. 1)

Ideological trauma, when ideologies that inform our culture and/or the ideological beliefs of one person are used to justify the suffering of another person, is related to cultural trauma (based on collectivities). In other words, understanding that trauma is not just held by individuals, but can be circulated through collectivities can help us to understand ways in which we could act to heal the suffering imposed by cultural and/or ideological traumas. The first step in the process is an awareness of the trauma and the injuries that it's causing.

Circuits of worth decide which side of the trauma we are on. Circuits of privilege allow for entitled accumulation while circuits of dispossession allow for the potential of complex, ideological traumas to be experienced. When white supremacy is understood as an ideological trauma, not just as an idea, it helps to us to understand

what and how the ideology does things and causes injury; it helps to explain why an African American person could internalize limiting beliefs about themselves and the collectivity that they also belong to and identify with. White supremacy has allowed white Americans of European descent to activate circuits of privilege that allow for accumulation even while other groups actively suffer. Circuits of privilege that are accessed due to white supremacy as a cultural, American norm are not always consciously understood by those who benefit from them. Conversely, white Americans are not always aware of the suffering that white accumulation can cause for other groups of Americans. The ways in which circuits of worth (specifically those activated by white supremacy) operate are complex, veiled, and allow for white unconsciousness (and apathy) at the macro-, exo-, and micro-levels.

The complex and veiled circuits of worth that are inherent to neoliberalism allow for versions of unconscious and unexamined narcissism to develop, particularly within the psyches of white Americans and/or those who hold white-dominant norms (white does not always equate to one's phenotype). Macro-level, white supremacy should be thought of as micro-level, white narcissism. In some sense, we are all narcissistic in some ways; we simply must be sometimes to get our needs met. Healthy narcissism allows for us to engage in self-preservation and to make sure we can take care of ourselves with healthy boundaries while relating to others. Unhealthy versions of narcissism, however, are about power in relationships and typically cause all kinds of mental, emotional, spiritual, and traumatic injuries as the narcissist denies the reality of causing those injuries. White narcissism, circuits of

privilege, (white) interest convergence, the concept of having an arrogant perception, being unconscious (veils of ignorance) about one's social positioning and the society we live in all culminate in apathy towards the suffering endured by others.

When striving to apply a loving perception to educational research about race and ethnicity as a white researcher, I need to become aware of the ways in which my circuits of worth are interacting with my capacity to be a qualitative research instrument. An arrogant perception as a researcher could result in dehumanizing, exploiting, and doing harm to research participants while a loving perception increases empathy, humanizes, and seeks to validate participants' lived experiences, and expands the capacity to understand those who are differently situated. The study was proposed so that I could explore how race was engaged in the classroom and investigate if teacher's micro-cultural experiences aligned with their ability (or their inability) to engage with students efficaciously and meaningfully on issues of race and ethnicity. However, during the data analysis, I began to wonder how macro-level, cultural ideologies were internalized or resisted by research participants, especially when micro-cultural experiences reinforced macro-level ideologies.

For example, one Black female teacher in the study was significantly impacted by the differences of rigor between her high school science course and her college science courses. As a result, she internalized limiting beliefs about her abilities and recognized that she suffers from imposter syndrome when she is surrounded by white peers. The limiting beliefs that were created by an institutional lack of rigor at her high school which did not prepare her adequately for her college

coursework still affects her view of herself. When asked about her schooling experiences, she had this to say:

Teacher: I get into UIC. It's totally different. I mean I get into classes and, you know, I'm the only Black person in there. And so that was a struggle when I first got there, for sure. Everything was easy for me in high school…

Researcher: Did they have support on campus to help you...

Teacher: …you know they did, but in terms of having the tools to be able to overcome failures, I didn't really have it instilled in me. I was just used to doing good all the time. So when I, literally, failed chemistry the first time, I didn't…I didn't know what to do. Like, they would have study groups or whatever, but I just wasn't used to having to reach out to do that and, I'm just like, No - I'll get it, I'll get it on my own! I took it again, I failed again. This time it was a D, but it's still. You know, I'm pre-med, I can't get a D chemistry. So I ended up having to change my major and everything. I wanted to be a doctor – like, I knew that growing up.

When asked another question about her micro-cultural background, she had this to say:

Researcher: Do you remember the first time. You were aware of your own race or ethnicity?

Teacher: UIC…again. Yeah. I'll never forget that kid. That chemistry class did a lot to me as you can see. I'll never forget that chemistry lab. So, we had our lecture and then we had our lab. And that chemistry lab, and this might be a reason why I never reached out…because after this moment…and I was the only Black person in the lab. I asked the guy next to me, who was white, I asked him for help on something and he ignored me. And I felt really stupid and I felt, like, embarrassed. And I was really let down at that moment. Because I never had any negative feelings against other races.

Researcher: But you specifically felt like...

Teacher: Yes. Absolutely. For the most part, all of my labs were all Asian and white. And I was the only Black woman. In the lab, lectures…it might have been that five of us out of like 200 were Black. But labs, for sure, I was always the only one. And then my professor was foreign and the T.A. was unapproachable. I don't know if I was making up excuses, but you know…there was a fear. That's when race kind of hit me…feeling like the outsider.

When asked to reflect on her considerations regarding choosing to teach in a predominantly Black school, the conversation again echoed her past racialized, micro-cultural experiences:

Teacher: [My niece]…she always talks all the time about how she doesn't have any Black teachers and she's like, why don't you just come work in my school? And I'm just like…I don't know if I would ever fit in? I don't know how. I don't know if it's a fear of not being good enough…

Researcher: Ah..

Teacher: I'm, like…I don't know. Sometimes I know I'm a damn good teacher, but sometimes I question…like, I don't know if I'm a good enough teacher to work [with all white teachers] cause I know I will have to prove myself there. Or…that's how I feel. I might be wrong. Actually, I could definitely be wrong. But it is a fear of like…I have to be really good if I want to work in a school where it's all white teachers and I'm the only Black one. And so it's that fear…going back to college, you know. My dad even, he's like, why don't you just apply…it's closer to where you live…and I'm like, No - I don't know if I'm good enough.

This teacher had internalized fears from both micro-cultural experiences and from macro-level ideological conditionings; traumas affect us when our past shows up in our present moments and this was certainly the case with this Black, female teacher. One the one hand, she knew herself well enough from past experiences to know that

she would not feel a sense of fit in a school where she is the only Black teacher on staff. On the other hand, her professional trajectory was impacted by her fears and limiting beliefs of not feeling good enough when she compared herself with white teachers. It's important to recognize though that this also created a resiliency for her teaching and instruction. During her classroom observations, she consistently and deliberately made efforts to instill a sense of high self-regard for students towards their Blackness. She wanted her students to believe they could achieve at the highest levels.

In a second example, a Black, male teacher coped with racialized, macro-level, ideological trauma around white supremacy by denying systemic racism exists. "In order for an individual to press a claim that unfavorable treatment stems from discriminatory practices she must assume the role of the victim. This transforms a social conflict into a psychological contest to reconcile a positive self-mage with the image of the victim as powerless and defeated," (Bumiller, 1987, p. 433). The concept of victimhood was central to this Black, male teacher's assertion that systemic racial discrimination doesn't exist, but rather it is economic discrimination that fuels systemic issues such as police brutality.

Researcher: Do you remember a recent conversation you've had around some of these issues about race?

Teacher: Yes…um…

Researcher: Formal or informal…doesn't matter.

Teacher: I was watching, what's his name...Crowder on YouTube…and I brought it up to one of my colleagues, just about…I'm a firm believer – I had a conversation with one of my old friends that

> I don't believe that there is systematic racism and I was...And she's a Black woman. She said, "Yes, it is – there is systematic Black racism. The issue is that *you* just can't see it."
>
> I started breaking down some of the things…like, I'm not saying I'm right and I'm trying to be very objective. Let's just be, for sport, argumentative and argue…and I'm arguing the side that I don't believe that there's systematic Black racism and she brought up police brutality. And I talking about it, like, it's very low [long pause]…as it pertains to police interactions with African-Americans. It's variable. We're probably rated very lowly cause they deal with us more often they do with any other ethnic groups. So, if you talk about this one cop dealing with all his interactions, he probably had a thousand interactions with Black folks, or Black people in general, that he probably had this amount with this group. So, in actuality, if a white officer kills a Black kid/boy, and that same white officer killed a white…the percentage of him killing the Black is lower because you have more interactions with them [Blacks] from…we're talking about from a statistical standpoint. And even statistically, CDC information, there's more white people that's unarmed that get killed than it is Black. But the commonality is really... My whole point was…it's not race, it's really economics. Look at economics more so, you know what I mean? So, when people talking about race, race, race - I'm like…that's cool, but it's like apples and oranges a little bit. Because if you make that argument - someone could argue against it and make a case about race, but I believe, that the focus should be more on people of lower economics because when you start looking at the economics- it's very similar or equal.

Unpacking this teacher's conceptualizations around race and economics leads to several contradictions. However, as a white researcher, I have no place to tell a Black, male teacher that systematic racism exists (especially during the interviewing process) when he claims that he has never experienced anti-Black racism towards himself.

> Researcher: Do you remember the first time you became aware of your own race or ethnicity?

Teacher: It's very interesting because, I mean, I lived in [the town he grew up in]. Which is when I lived in a predominately Black neighborhood and went to a predominantly Black school. So, I didn't never – I only learned about racism, but never really experienced it. It was a learned thing, like, about watching TV and watching shows, and hearing political parties talking to me…telling me that I'm being...that i'm disadvantaged. But never really, truly, experiencing it as it pertains to a white individual or any other ethnic group putting their authority over me…or even… not even…even in my interactions with police officers, I was usually, probably doing something that looked sometimes questionable. Like, I never experienced me walking down the street and being frisked or something like that. So, to answer your question…I didn't really see it. I just heard about it, saw it in movies, saw it in rap videos, but never experienced it.

Bumiller (1987) let's us know that, "The ethic of survival means different things to different people, depending on how they define their responsibilities and their bases for self-respect and how they view their struggles and needs," (p. 430). In this case, the Black, male teacher subscribed to respectability politics ("I was probably doing something that looked questionable") and refused to see himself as a potential victim of anti-Black discrimination. His ethic of survival was to frame discrimination as equally applied to all races based on economic standings. He had power to change his economic realities, but not his racial identity. "Survival is a form of resistance," (Lerner, as quoted in Bumiller, 1987, p. 439) and in this teacher's lived experiences, since he had not experienced overt racism, he coped with the potential for discrimination by believing that it is economically based and not racially motivated. Faithful witnessing in this case meant that I needed to view his ethic of survival as valid, empowering for his lived experiences, and understand that he did not feel

disenfranchised from economic mobility. Although his viewpoints contradicted my theoretical frameworks, I needed to listen and understand that his micro-cultural experiences and ethic of survival were his forms of resistance because to believe that he is the victim of racial discrimination would contradict and defeat his individual ethic of survival. When discussing learned helplessness among his students, he had this to say:

> **Teacher:** But my thing is, in every situation you have... If there's a victim, there are levels of dealing with a tumultuous situation, right?
>
> **Researcher:** Yeah.
>
> **Teacher:** But then there's also privilege. That's why with the guy, Jessie Smollett, he wanted to be a victim so he even orchestrated...He orchestrated a situation to become one! Because he just realized that in society that there is a privilege, clearly...There's a privilege that's coming with being a victim now, you know what I mean? And that's why I don't, that's why I'm trying, I'm telling students...Like, "You can be, 'I'm Black and poor... ' You can, that is the case, but you don't want that to be your identity. You know what I mean?...You don't wanna take that...you don't wanna internalize it. 'Cause when it comes to victimhood…I just don't want students to walk around...expecting favor because of victimhood.

In this teacher's mind, learned helplessness led to a misguided sense of privilege that came with victimhood, and he believed this was all disempowering for his students. This teacher wanted his students to feel empowered and to him, acknowledging systematic anti-Black racism would be to see himself and his students as victims with minimal amounts of power if that victimhood was tied to the color of their skin.

When the victimhood was tied to economic discrimination, this teacher felt like he had the power and responsibility to change his circumstances.

In these individual micro-cultural analyses, two Black teachers dealt with systematic racism with very different coping mechanisms. One internalized the limiting beliefs from micro-cultural experiences and macro-level ideologies, while the other created a narrative that shielded him from macro-level ideologies because his micro-cultural experiences, in his mind, did not resonate with the idea of systematic racial discrimination. One possible explanation for the different ways in which these teachers made sense of their experiences is the fact that we all respond to trauma in different ways. The Black, female teacher coped through a combined freeze-flight response (which served to limit her own internal beliefs around worthiness and externally meant she would not pursue new positions outside of a majority Black institutions) and the Black, male teacher coped by denying the ideology of white supremacy as a means of fighting the internalization of limiting beliefs that white supremacy and its inherent anti-Blackness require.

At the beginning of the school year, two Black female school directors who grew up in the surrounding neighborhood were hired to lead their respective schools. Both of the new instructional administrators, tasked with creating and facilitating teacher professional development, left in the middle of the school year. From this point in, teachers had very little instructional support and were mostly left to their own devices. An outside organization that partnered with the school for social-emotional learning and restorative justice offered some professional development

around trauma-informed practices, but these were never implemented at the organizational level. The professional development that this organization provided for teachers was informational and so the teachers were not formally trained in trauma-informed best practices and, further, there was little mention of race or how to engage topics around race. Teachers had no guidance for better understanding their own conceptualizations or internalizations around race or for better understanding how their students would be understanding race developmentally either. While both school directors expressed a desire to provide professional development around topics of race and identity in the classroom, neither provided supports for teachers or even a coherent framework for doing so.

During the data analysis process, I began to understand that my study made the teachers' traumas come into focus. When a loving perception was applied, I started to realize that I am not willing to detail teachers' individual micro-cultural traumas to explain why they might not meaningfully engage issues of race and ethnicity in their own classrooms. It is sensitive work and I do not know what it is like to be a Black man or Black woman in our society. Very quickly, I started to realize that critiques of how Black teachers engaged race in the classroom would be doing harm and victim-blaming Black teachers, especially when their micro-cultural experiences helped to detail their internalizations and/or resistances of white supremacy. My study, had I kept my focus on individual teachers would serve to potentially shame and exploit their generosity in sharing so openly with me about painful events in their lives. I did not want to accumulate while dispossessing the

humanity of my participants; the teachers in my study were all doing their best to be resilient and cope with their experiences, while the systems and institutions in which they were ecologically nested were creating tensions and contradictions for their personal conceptualizations of race.

Sustained, systemic depravation and the creation of neoliberal circuits of dispossession can manifest in individual as traumatic experiences and contexts. It will not manifest the same way in different individuals. Studying race and neoliberal ideologies made the connections between diminishing, macro-level ideologies and individuals' internalizations of complex racism come to light. As a white researcher, it was critical that I was aware of both my own consciousness as my qualitative instrument for conducting research and my own social positioning within our culture. To continue with the study's design and to interpret how individual teachers enacted race in the classroom would have resulted in a narrowed field of vision that would have entirely missed an opportunity for understanding differently situated others. Studying race is complex and as careful as I thought I was being during the study's design, the individual level psychology that must be engaged to understand connections between how race is lived and experienced and then engaged and expressed within classroom instruction is more than this study was prepared to interpret. To be clear, this topic should be investigated and understood further, however, understanding the systemic effects of neoliberal circuits of worth was also valuable. As an object of reflection and a story of systemic dispossession, this study can be far more useful to the field than it would have been if I had engaged in

drawing conclusions about how and why Black educators engage race in the classroom. That story would best be told *by and with* Black educators, not *for* them.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions and Implications- Circuits of Trauma and the Need for Healthy Public Systems

7.1 From Circuits of Worth to Circuits of Trauma

This study illuminates how neoliberal circuits of worth allowed for social entrepreneurs with a social project to activate circuits of accumulation and privilege while unconsciously (re)creating circuits of dispossession within a stand-alone charter school's experience. The institutional dispossession that many students and families experienced within the Chicago Public School system as CPS disproportionately closed "failing" neighborhood, public schools in favor of quasi-public/private school choice serves to (re)create new circuits of trauma instead of providing families and communities with high-quality educational options. Closing neighborhood schools does not ensure institutional dispossession, yet in this case study, that was certainly the experience of students, families, and educators when the school could no longer maintain a healthy enrollment and the necessary funding for sustainable operations. Applying a trauma-informed lens to both day-to-day practices within school and to educational research can help to make visible the obscured neoliberal logics that allow for undue neoliberal accumulation and opportunity hoarding. Doubly segregated schools result when integration policies are dispossessed by the macro-level and exo-level contexts that create the field of possibilities for micro-level manifestations of educational reforms. What was once understood as a common, public good can instead be divested and dispossessed by the macro- and exo-levels of the system when neoliberal logics become ubiquitous at all nested, ecological levels.

Neoliberal Accumulation and Dispossession

Neoliberal logics serve to obscure white supremacy, paternalism, and American liberalism/individualism. Therefore, Ehrenreich's idea that, "racialized outcomes do not necessarily require racist actors," is particularly poignant. The school leaders and educators who took part in this study were not racist actors, however their social entrepreneurship project of opening a charter school resulted in racialized outcomes; thus creating another "failing" school that could not adequately serve its Black students and its historically dispossessed community. The school leaders who intended to push against white supremacy and to find ways to invest in the community where the school was located instead unintentionally (and dysconsciously) contributed to further community divestment and dispossession at the micro-level. However, systems cause community level dispossession, not individuals. This study, its findings, and its conclusions are meant to serve as an object of reflection to bring light to a story of neoliberal dispossession in one city's educational reform policy implementation.

The school leaders in this study came into this project from educational backgrounds that were well-aligned with neoliberal educational reform movements. Their paths and trajectories within the field were dominated by neoliberal logics. While they experienced new upward mobility, power, and identities (interest convergence) due to the approval of their charter, their "technical expertise," from former experiences within alternative teaching corps, MBA programs, and with other charter networks, "helped to put in place the policies of conservative modernization,"

(Apple, 2001, p.58) at the micro-level. None of the school leaders would have been qualified under CPS regulations to open or run a traditional public school without additional certifications, degrees, and most importantly, more time and experience leading a school. This is not to suggest that the school leaders in this study could not have accomplished those trajectories and positions given their skillsets and talents, it is only to suggest that their upward mobility was the result of neoliberal interest convergence between all levels of the nested ecology of their school. In hindsight, the two founding school leaders who took part in the study both acknowledged and were able to reflect upon ways that the system is failing those it is meant to serve. Their professional accumulation, however, also caused their eventual dispossession as school leaders when the system also allowed for the school's "predestined failure." However, their resumes do not suffer in proportionate ways to the lives of the students and families who's access to high-quality educational opportunities are displaced institutionally.

"Failing" Public Schools as Institutional Dispossession and Trauma

Public schooling can be a form of institutional accumulation or institutional dispossession for students, families, and communities. This study is a story of dispossession; however, it obscures the fact that institutional sustainability and efficacy (what we should have as a minimum goal for all public schools) in neighborhoods that are predominantly wealthier and/or white, creates circuits of privilege and accumulation for those families and communities. If one does not live in a community that is experiencing historical and/or current divestment and

dispossession as a micro-level manifestation of their school, one could be entirely unaware that a functioning public school is a form of systems level accumulation and privilege. One might take for granted that "everyone has the same opportunities" even when we know that there are significant opportunity gaps in U.S. schooling and school reform policies. Public schooling often serves as a form of compounded institutional deprivation in many, if not most, low-income communities of color (as well as in rural, white communities). The intergenerational lack of access to safe, quality schools dispossesses the futures of the students who have no other affordable institutional options for schooling and creates institutional trauma for students who are subjected to chaotic school careers which require them to bounce between community schools and/or charter schools.

Neoliberal multiculturalism and third-wave capitalism requires that all of us who exist within it become somewhat narcissistic in order to get our needs met; CRT's concept of (white/neoliberal) interest convergence is akin to a collective level of (white/neoliberal) narcissism. Neoliberal interest convergence (because accumulation is no longer determined by melanin) drives societal and cultural manifestations of apathy towards those who are actively suffering. The privilege of attending well-functioning schools creates blind spots towards those communities that do not have stable, community-based schools. A good school is assumed as a right extended to all, not a privilege, and so those with high-quality opportunities do not properly contextualize their privilege and social positioning with larger societal contexts. School systems does not inherently create circuits of worth or

dispossession; macro- and exo- level systems decide community worth based on the existing power dynamics. When schooling creates institutional trauma (or likewise institutional accumulation/entitlement) over multiple generations due a lack of access (or because access is always present) to equitable opportunities, macro- and exo-level ideologies converge in micro-level institutional contexts to create the potential for individuals to internalize those ideologies (white supremacy, white liberalism, paternalism) as limiting (or expansive) belief systems.

Internalizations of Historical Circuits of Worth

All educators would be well served to push for education to broaden its understandings of trauma. Trauma is not just held within individuals; it is held within collectives and within group identities, as well. Trauma can be held inter-generationally and can also be transmitted through ideological narratives and imaginaries that exist within family systems. Additionally, trauma can be inflicted via day-to-day practices within institutions and systems with obscurity. When a family member emotionally abuses, emotionally abandons, or creates toxicity in a one-on-one connection, often complex-trauma takes the form of internalized limiting beliefs and various coping mechanisms result in an individual's behaviors. It is the position of this study that institutional dispossession and abandonment has a similar potential to create complex-trauma within individuals who grow up in historically dispossessed communities. Furthermore, educators need to understand that internalized limiting beliefs (whether they originate in one's micro-cultural family system or from macro- and exo-level contexts and ideologies) exist within not only

their students, but likely within themselves. When faced with cortisol inducing moments, we all experience trauma responses and coping mechanisms that trigger flight, fight, freeze, or fawn; this is what it means to be human. Behavioral and classroom management systems need to consider the potential triggers and traumas experienced by all actors within a shared micro-level cultural setting in order to better meet the needs of educators and students within schools.

Where There is Neoliberal Accumulation, There will be Dispossession

Working in contemporary schools should require knowledge of America's neoliberal logics, imaginaries, and policies; how do these logics, imaginaries, policies shape the conditions and fields of possibilities for students' futures? When studying a micro-level unit of analysis within public education, the macro- and exo-level conditions should be taken into consideration with a bifocality of methodology and analyses so that we can better understand the nested ecological experiences of study participants and communities. Macro-level ideologies create the conditions that shape human behavior at the exo- and micro-levels; we are not immune to the cultural conditions of our society. The meso-level actors and forms bring the macro-level policies into the exo- and micro-levels' daily practices.

Philanthrocapitalism and the outsized power and influence of philanthrocapitalists is the result of unfettered (white) liberalism and paternalism. The egocentrism that neoliberalism, not only allows but, praises and proselytizes within the professional and managerial new middle class needs to be exposed, but not for the purpose of shaming and blaming. It needs to be illuminated so that those who

intend to use their privilege for sociocentric good can actually do good. When we know better, we can do better (Maya Angelou). Dysconsciouness towards neoliberal logics (and dysconscious racism, as well) is a prerequisite for continued interest convergence and the permanence of racism within America's institutional settings. But again, if we are unaware and/or choose to remain ignor(ant) of how insidious, diffuse, and resilient those ideologies are within our institutions and culture, then we will repeat our history of colonialism and white supremacy with new, modern edges and frays. We cannot allow those with outsized wealth to dictate social policy simply because they experienced extraordinary success within capitalist markets.

The macro-, exo-, and micro-levels of ecological systems are in constant reciprocal relations with one another through meso-level interactivity. When macro-level neoliberal logics and policies over-privilege the markets, that has a direct effect on exo- and micro-level possibilities for addressing problems and finding solutions. The ways in which we frame issues will dictate the ways in which we consider their solutions. When the neoliberal crisis narrative views public schooling as a slow, moving monolithic institution that is unresponsive to the needs of employers and communities, then our solutions will privilege finding ways to meets the needs of employers through the creation of private-public competition and school choice imaginaries. Neoliberal logics see no other way (TINA prevails), but we do have other ways of framing issues within educational reforms. We need to find new frameworks for understanding how to better meet the needs of all students. Educational reforms need to take into account the historical accumulation and

dispossession that have occurred because of the lack of political will and commitment to equitable funding and integration. While neoliberal reforms and discourse often serve to create public distrust in our public system of schooling, educational research needs to focus on regenerating public trust in public schooling through careful and deliberate research.

7.2: The Need for Healthy, Regenerative Systems

This study does not propose to have the answers to the complex, ecologically nested issues that were presented in this dissertation. This study hopes to serve as an object of reflection that can convey some of the complexities, contradictions, and tensions that educators, particularly those that grew up with privilege and accumulation, face when trying to implement reforms that are aligned with neoliberal logics in historically dispossessed community contexts.

This study agrees with Pauline Lipman (2011) when she states that, "Reframing the neoliberal educational discourse is a critical aspect of fracturing the hegemonic alliance that supports it," (p. 163) and believes that accumulating stories of neoliberal dispossession can be a key lever to change (Weis & Fine, 2012). However, the stories of dispossession experienced by students and educators at the micro-level were not experienced equally. The educators experience varying degrees of disappointment and loss when their workplaces are mismanaged, and their jobs are displaced, however, the students and families experience far more devastating and complex layers of divestment and discontent with an institution that they are told they should trust and rely upon for upward, economic mobility. Predestined failure for

schools means predestined failure for everyone within that micro-level cultural context. Humans respond to trauma differently, often unpredictably, however, systemic abandonment (dispossession) and compounded deprivation cannot be healthy for anyone forced to endure unhealthy, "failing" systems.

Limitations of Doing a Single Case Study Design and Analysis

The most obvious limitation from a single case study design is that each micro-level institution is its own unique culture. The findings cannot be transferred or replicated in the exact ways that manifested in this case study. It is one school's experiences with one set of school leaders that took place within one dispossessed community. However, the nested ecological systems theory and the bi-focality of research design can help researchers and educators within the field to find parallels between multiple case studies. Locating the logics, imaginaries, and policies that create a story of dispossession within public, micro-level institutional settings can begin to demonstrate the presumed "efficacy" of neoliberal reforms that seek to privatize public systems while simultaneously dispossessing communities that have been coping with historical and institutional dispossession for multiple generations.

Implications for Teacher Education and Teachers' Identity Explorations

Teacher Education needs to create ways to incorporate a trauma-informed lens within its coursework and student teaching experiences. Included in this trauma-informed lens should be a way for teachers to expand their views of trauma to understand that multiple types of traumas exist in each of our lives. Acute trauma (e.g.: death, injury, attack) and complex trauma (e.g: neglect, verbal abuse, emotional

abandonment) manifest differently in everyone. Both students and teachers may be coping with acute and/or complex trauma as they go about their daily lives. Teachers need to not only be aware of how trauma may be triggered and manifest in student behaviors, they need to be aware of how it manifests in their own behaviors. Additionally, when we add the layers of collective and intergenerational trauma that also affects family systems, there is only compassion, empathy, and understanding to be gained by working with teachers to expand their views and understandings of what trauma looks like and how it take form. Internalized beliefs from our lived experiences, whether they are from macro-level ideologies reinforced by our shared culture and media, or the beliefs are from micro-level family biases handed down through stories and actions, are inevitable.

Working with teachers to understand their own positionality within our larger systems and to be aware of their own triggers and limiting beliefs will serve both educators and their students. When educators can better understand their own reactions, coping mechanisms, and triggers, they will be able to understand and make decisions about how to approach their students' behaviors more readily. The stress that surfaces as new teachers learn classroom management practices with a trauma-informed lens could be mitigated if teachers understood the root cause of why a student might be shutting down or becoming oppositional during a classroom interaction. While teachers may not have the tools to directly understand those in their classrooms and schools that are differently situated from themselves, the coping

mechanisms, and behaviors that manifest are much easier to identify and address for the highest good for all in their classrooms.

Implications for Trauma-Informed Practices in Educational Research

Educational research that centers on equity and empirical disparities in schooling should take the potential for internalizations of trauma into consideration when considering research designs and disseminating findings and conclusions, particularly within qualitative research. Weis and Fine's (2012) concept of including contextual bifocality in research designs would help to make visible the macro-level conditions and ideologies that impact micro-level actors and environments. Additionally, if schools and classroom practices have a need to be trauma-informed to better serve students from historically dispossessed communities, then research must also be trauma-informed to better understand research participants and their daily lived experiences as they are research participants.

Critical Race Theory helps to make visible the systemic realities that impact institutions when a researcher considers race because it helps to provide a framework for understanding and exploring how the various tenets of CRT impacts those who are dispossessed along racialized lines. Critical theories that focus on one aspect of intersectional identities (race, class, gender, LGBTQ+, and ableism) that illuminate the subjective experiences according to those identities serve as a useful lens for taking complexities into account throughout research activities. The post-structural concept of multiple subjective experiences can inform educational research in

meaningful ways by centering identities and lived experiences that might otherwise remain obscured.

Implications for Educational Policy Makers

Understanding how micro-level institutions cope with neoliberal, macro- and exo-level policy initiatives and implementation will be critical for transforming "failing schools" into high-quality, equitable, public institutions that truly serve the communities where they are located. Policy makers are often far removed from the micro-level manifestations that their policies impose. Stories of dispossession can be critical levers for illuminating the effects of public policies that follow neoliberal logics and imaginaries. When a school is forced to close or fails to adequately serve its community, policy makers need to understand that it is not just a failed policy but could also be inflicting institutional trauma on students, families, and educators. America's current episteme of neoliberal capitalism is working exactly as it was intended to, it is not a broken system. It is however a toxic and abusive system that breeds apathy towards those who are historically dispossessed by its logics and false imaginaries. If America truly wants to live up the mythology of meritocracy, then our micro-level systems are the local institutions where equity must percolate from. Philanthrocapitalists and social entrepreneurs who only seek expanding marketplaces, corporate tax cuts, an interest convergent outcomes should not be "trickling down" their business logics via public policy formation into micro-level school settings. Local educators and community leaders know their communities best and should be

the voices that help us to understand how not to (re)create historical traumas in our present systems.

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